

# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



## THESIS

**ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF TRAINING  
EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CRUCIBLE AT MARINE  
CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT, SAN DIEGO**

by

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March 1999

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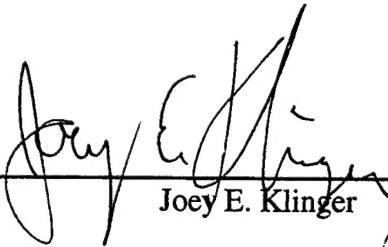
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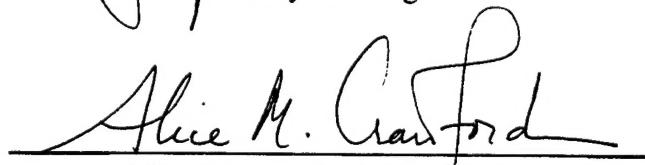
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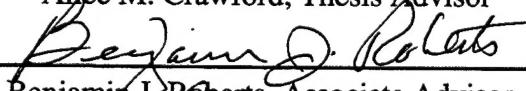


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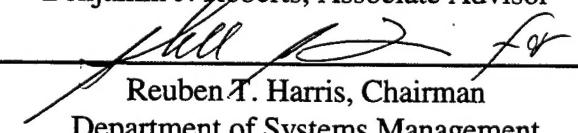
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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the Crucible event at Marine Corps Recruit Depot. At the direction of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, the Crucible was added in December 1996 as a new training event to Marine Corps recruit training. This study focuses on the perceptions of the Recruit Training Regiment's drill instructors and officers regarding the training effectiveness of the Crucible. Structured interviews and discussions were conducted with Marines from Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego and five main themes emerged. Additionally, the Crucible was analyzed based on current training methods and theories. Results showed that the Crucible is effectively reinforcing the teachings of teamwork and core values; is an effective rite of transition; is effectively using Marine Corps history and symbols; is teaching combat decision making skills; and has the proper level of difficulty for new recruits. The study findings suggest that the Crucible is an effective training event, its methods are sound, and it is a defining moment of a recruit's initial training experience.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. BACKGROUND

In December of 1996, the first Marine Corps' recruits completed an event new to recruit training called the Crucible. The Crucible is a 54-hour exercise that concludes Marine Corps' recruit training as its culminating event. The purpose of this event is to transform civilians into Marines and imbue them with the Marine Corps' Core Values of honor, courage, and commitment. This thesis studies the perceptions of the Crucible event from the perspective of Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) staff and drill instructors (DIs).

On the first day of his tenure as Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Krulak issued his Commandant's Planning Guidance (Krulak 1995). This document provided a roadmap and intent of where the Marine Corps was headed under General Krulak. In this document, the General presented his theory of "Transformation and Cohesion." This theory was intended to be the cornerstone of how new recruits are transformed into Marines and imbued with the core values. These core values guide them in difficult decisions throughout their time as Marines and the rest of

their lives. This process is an on-going dynamic process throughout a Marine's career.

It is during the recruit training phase that the Crucible is conducted as the last hurdle before a recruit can successfully complete training and be called a Marine. The Crucible is designed to be intense, physically demanding, and full of hardships that highlight teamwork and core values. It is during this time that drill instructors (DIs) serve as role models and accelerate the transformation process. It is expected that the Crucible will be a defining moment of an individual's life.

The Crucible is a two and one-half day event, with only eight hours of sleep in two days (four per night). The recruits are only given two and one-half Meals-Ready-To-Eat (MRE) for the Crucible, expected to hike 40 miles through all types of terrain, and participate in eight major events. These events consists of a day movement resupply, a casualty evacuation, a combat assault course, a reaction course, an enhanced confidence course, an unknown distance firing course, a night infiltration course, and a night march.

Within the eight events are the 12 warrior stations, which are obstacles that cannot be overcome by an individual; they must be completed through teamwork. Each

station is named after a Marine hero; 11 stations are named after Marines who received the Medal of Honor, and the other station is named after a Marine who died saving others from a fire.

After the completion of all the training events during the first two days, the recruits complete an early morning hike to finish the Crucible on the third day. It is then that the recruits have finally completed their 54-hour ordeal. The DIs then present every recruit with a small eagle, globe, and anchor (Marine Corps symbol) emblem, and they are called "Marines" for the first time. It is during this ceremony that the participants pass from recruits to Marines.

#### **B. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the perceptions of the training effectiveness of the Crucible event during Marine Corps recruit training. The research focuses particularly on the perceptions and experiences of the DIs and Recruit Training Regiment staff with respect to the impact of the Crucible on teamwork, Marine Corps' core values, the Marine Corps' organizational culture, and as a rite of passage for Marine Corps recruits.

### **C. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

The Crucible is a relatively new training event to Marine Corps recruit training. Both recruit depots at Parris Island, South Carolina and San Diego, California have identical versions of the Crucible. The sites differ in terrain and geography. Further, since females are only trained at Parris Island, both males and females participate in identical versions of the Crucible at that site, while only males are involved in San Diego.

The perceptions and experiences of the interviewees were evaluated, and common themes were identified to evaluate the Crucible. The research was conducted at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, California. Thus, the scope of the research is focused on male enlisted recruits.

The method selected to evaluate the Crucible was structured interviews and discussions. The personnel selected were the Crucible training facilitators from Weapons and Field Training Battalion, drill instructors and the company commander from a recruit training company, the Commanding Officer of the Recruit Training Regiment, and the Commanding Officer of Weapons and Field Training Battalion.

#### **D. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

Chapter II reviews the background and history of Marine Corps recruit training. Chapter III describes the Crucible in detail including a description of all the events of the Crucible and the Marine Corps emblem ceremony. Chapter IV presents a review of relevant organizational training theories and a theoretical analysis. The results of the interviews and observations are examined in Chapter V, and main themes are developed from the perceptions expressed by the interviewees. Excerpts of the interviews are presented to support these themes. Chapter VI presents a summary, conclusions, and recommendations.



## **II. BACKGROUND**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a background and overview of the history of Marine Corps recruit training. Included in this chapter is a description of the "Transformation Process" of civilian to Marine. The next section of this chapter presents an explanation of why the Crucible was added to recruit training. The last section of the chapter describes the Marine Corps' Core Values program. A detailed overview of the Crucible is presented in Chapter III.

### **B. BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF MARINE CORPS RECRUIT TRAINING**

Since the founding of the Marine Corps in November of 1775, the Marine Corps has been concerned with training new members to the organization. However, for over half of the Marine Corps' existence, no formal recruit training existed. After a new Marine was brought into the service, he learned his trade through local instruction and on-the-job training (OJT). One of the early Commandants, LtCol Franklin Wharton, attempted to formalize training in 1805 by standardizing how Marines would be trained to shoot and march (Woulfe 1996). Unfortunately, most recruits entering the Marine Corps in the early 1800s were illiterate, did

not speak English, and were in their middle teen years. The trainers of these new recruits were not much different than the recruits they were expected to train. Due to a lack of fiscal resources and qualified trainers, formalized training was impossible at that time.

Finally, a century later in 1905, the Marine Corps established formal recruit training (Woulfe 1996). The Marines established training centers in Philadelphia, Norfolk, Puget Sound, and Mare Island. The training consisted of eight weeks of close order drill, physical training, close combat, and rifle marksmanship. Even today, the basic instructions of recruit training still center around these four core skills. Initially, training was conducted at Navy bases; it was not until 1915 that the Marine Corps opened up its own training base at Parris Island and then 1923 that one was opened in San Diego (Woulfe 1996).

During wartime and peace, the numbers of recruits and the scope of training have fluctuated to meet the nation's demands. Usually during times of war, training was shortened and tailored to the style of combat the Marines would likely face in war.

Since the beginning of formal recruit training, there have been instances when the conduct of training has been

questioned. The infamous incident in the mid-1950s of the accidental drowning of six Marines in Ribbon Creek brought national public attention to the process of recruit training. Also, in the mid-1970s, numerous complaints of maltreatment and abuse caused the Committee on Armed Services to issue a report on Marine Corps Recruit Training and Recruiting Programs (Woulfe 1996). After the report was made public, the Marine Corps almost lost oversight of its own recruit training. This situation was averted only because the Marines instituted improved screening and training of drill instructors and increased officer supervision.

In the late 1980s, Basic Warrior Training was added for all recruits to close a recognized gap in warfighting ability. In the early 1990s, General Mundy (Commandant, Marine Corps) added the teaching of core values to recruits. It was when the next Commandant, General Krulak, came to lead the Marine Corps that he saw a need to strengthen the core values training. He also devised the theory of the Transformation Process from civilian to Marine. General Krulak also added the Crucible to recruit training, which added another week to the training syllabus.

### **C. TRANSFORMATION PROCESS**

The Transformation Process is broken down into four phases: the Recruiting Phase, the Recruit Training Phase, the Cohesion Phase, and the Sustainment Phase. The first phase of this process takes place when a potential recruit meets a Marine Corps recruiter. It is during this phase that the recruiter will come across two types of potential recruits (Krulak 1996). One type of individual is a young man or woman with solid characters, strong family values, and good moral values; the other individual has moral characteristics and values that need correcting or reinforcing. Recruiters are instructed not to accept potential recruits if they exhibit morally bankrupt values or have broken laws (Krulak 1996). It is during this phase that recruiters are the first screens of which individuals have the potential to become successful Marines.

It also during this phase that the Marine Corps can enhance the education and process of preparation for recruit training during the Delayed Entry Program (DEP). The DEP allows enlistees to wait up until a year in the civilian community before they leave for recruit training. The new recruits are introduced for the first time to the three core values. They learn what is expected of them and

what kind of organization they have joined. The recruiter is expected to be a mentor to the new recruits and help begin their transformation process.

The second phase of the process is conducted at the two Marine Corps Recruit Depots (MCRD) at Parris Island and San Diego. It is during this time that drill instructors (DIs) serve as role models and accelerate the transformation process. During recruit training, the Crucible is expected to become a defining moment of an individual's life. The Commandant expects the Crucible to, "...focus on teamwork and followership, with the drill instructor having the pivotal role as leader, mentor, and role model...and...to survive the Crucible the recruits and their DI's must operate as a team. The Crucible is tough, but with an overarching theme of teamwork--over and over again, teamwork and commitment to one's fellow Marines." (Krulak 1996)

The third phase of the transformation process is the Cohesion Phase. Most of the transformation from civilian to Marine is expected to occur in the second phase, but the third phase completes the transformation process by reinforcing and strengthening the lessons taught at recruit training. It is during this phase that Marines are expected to form into cohesive groups and bond. Groups of

Marines are assigned together at their specialty school (e.g., School of Infantry) and then they are sent to a new unit. It is expected that this group of Marines will spend their first enlistment together.

The fourth phase is the Sustainment Phase. This phase is expected to occur during a Marines' career. Thus, it is a continually on-going phase for a Marine. The professional military education (PME) schools and unit leaders are expected to reinforce the core values and teamwork through education and conducting everyday business with ethical conduct. General Krulak states, "Leaders will manifest our core values and mentor their subordinates. Living our ethos is a shared responsibility for all Marines and lasts until the day a Marine hangs up the uniform for the last time--and longer." (Krulak 1996)

#### **D. WHY THE CRUCIBLE?**

There are two reasons the Crucible was added to recruit training. The first reason was based on the recognition that the operating environment in which Marines will be employed in future conflicts and operations is changing. The second reason was in response to certain changes in society's values and morals. With respect to the first reason, General Krulak envisions that future conflicts will consist of, "...decentralized operations, high technology,

increasing weapons lethality, asymmetric threats, the mixing of combatants and noncombatants and urban combat." (Krulak 1997) The Marines who will be fighting in this new environment will be expected to be good decision-makers, self-confident, and have trust in the members of their unit. To meet these new requirements, Marines are expected to be trained to the highest standards for every rank. The goal of the training is to prepare for decision-making that will be decentralized and pushed down to the lowest level; a private might be in a situation where he or she needs to make a decision that was normally made by an officer. The Crucible was introduced to recruit training to specifically contribute to training Marines to these new high standards of warfare.

The second reason for adding the Crucible can be summed up in one label, "Generation X."<sup>1</sup> The leaders of the Marine Corps realize that all new recruits are "Generation X'ers" and the leaders of the Marine Corps in the next century will come from this group. The Marine Corps brought in a team of psychologists to understand how this generation differs from others. The research showed that "Generation X" is looking for standards, they want something special, they want to be part of something bigger than themselves,

and they want to be challenged (Krulak 1997). The Crucible was designed to address these characteristics. Through the Marine Corps, this generation can be part of something big and special and through their service, able to give something back to the nation (Krulak 1997).

#### **E. MARINE CORPS CORE VALUES**

Simply put, the Marine Corps has three core values of honor, courage, and commitment. New Marines are expected to live by these standards while serving in the Corps, both during working hours and while off-duty. The Marine Corps defines the core values as:

1. Honor- This is the bedrock of our character. The quality that guide Marines to exemplify the ultimate in ethical and moral behavior; never to lie, cheat or steal, and also to abide by an uncompromising code of integrity; to respect human dignity; and to have concern for each other. The quality of maturity, dedication, trust, and dependability, that commits Marines to act responsibly; to be accountable for their actions.
2. Courage- The heart of our Core Values. Courage is the mental, moral and physical strength ingrained in Marines. This will carry them through the challenges of combat and allow to master any fear; to do what is right; to adhere to a higher standard of personal conduct, to lead by example and to make tough decisions under stress and pressure. It's the inner strength that enables a Marine to take that extra step.
3. Commitment- The spirit of determination and dedication within the Marine Corps that leads to

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<sup>1</sup> Generation X can be described as the generation born from the mid 1960s to the early 1980s.

professionalism and mastery of the art of war. It leads to the highest code discipline for the unit and oneself, and it is the ingredient that enables 24-hour a day dedication to Corps and country. Additionally it is pride, concern for others, and other unrelenting determination to achieve a standard of excellence in every endeavor. Commitment is the value that establishes the Marine as the warrior and citizen others strive to emulate. (Recruit Training Regiment, MCRD San Diego, Ca. 1997)

During recruit training, there are 27 core values classes that are taught to the recruits. The classes are scheduled to last thirty minutes and are taught through the guided discussion technique. The DIs teach the majority of the classes, but a military Chaplain teaches five of the classes. The sources for the core value classes are from 27 Medal of Honor citations and simulated scenarios that depict everyday situations Marines might encounter while at work or off-duty.

The overall objective of the core values program is to teach values awareness and character development. The classes are supposed to cause a philosophical shift to teamwork over individual success. The class topics cover such subjects as integrity (two classes), relationship between training and personal problems, alcohol abuse (two classes), professional conduct between men and women, sexual harassment (three classes), heroism in combat (six classes), suicide (2 classes), drug abuse (two classes),

sleeping on post, blanket party (recruit on recruit abuse), infidelity, child abuse, fraternization, discrimination, substance abuse, leave and liberty, sexual responsibilities and behavior (three classes), equal opportunity, fraternization, marriage, individualism, racism (Recruit Training Regiment, MCRD San Diego, Ca. 1997).

This curriculum of core values equates to thirteen and one half-hours of scheduled instruction. This does not account for core values instruction that is taught during impromptu classes by the DIs and staff.

This chapter presented a short background of Marine Corps recruit training, to include the Transformation Process and the Core Values Program. The next chapter provides an overview of the Crucible.

### III. CRUCIBLE OVERVIEW

#### A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the Crucible and a description of each event, the final hike, and the Marine Corps Emblem ceremony. Data were collected for this description by direct observation of the event and the *Crucible Operations Order* (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.).

#### B. OVERVIEW

The Crucible is conducted at Weapons and Field Training Battalion (WFTBN), Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD), San Diego.<sup>2</sup> The Crucible is conducted in the 11<sup>th</sup> week of training, followed by the final week of transition and graduation from recruit training.

The first seven weeks of training for the recruits are conducted at MCRD, San Diego. On the Sunday at the end of week seven, the recruits are transported to Edson Range at Camp Pendleton, California for the next four weeks of training. It is during these four weeks that the recruits will qualify with their service rifle, conduct a week of field firing, and complete the Crucible.

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<sup>2</sup> There is a mirror organization on the East Coast at MCRD, Parris Island, South Carolina.

The Crucible is a 54-hour event, an approximately 40-mile hike "final exam" for recruits in Marine Corps Basic Training. The course is made up of 12 warrior stations, a day movement course, day infiltration course, reaction course, bayonet assault course, confidence course, obstacle course, team shoot, pugil sticks, a night movement, a night infiltration course, core value classes, hikes, and the Marine Corps Emblem Ceremony. All of these events are designed to build individual and team confidence, esprit de corps, and camaraderie. None of the events can be accomplished alone; it is a process that nurtures team development (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.).

During the Crucible, the recruits are broken down into squads of approximately 18-20 recruits. Each squad has a Drill Instructor (DI) who acts as its leader, mentor, and advisor. The DI guides them to each event and advises them as they negotiate each obstacle. After the conclusion of each event, the DI conducts a debrief with the recruits. Assisting the DIs, are facilitators from WFTBN, who are DIs on temporary duty from the recruit training companies. These facilitators have been given the nickname of "field hats."<sup>3</sup> The field hats are the experts on the safe conduct

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<sup>3</sup> Hat is slang for Drill Instructors, which is derived from their distinctive Campaign Cover (Smokey the Bear Hat).

of each event of the Crucible. They advise and assist the DIs and the squad of recruits.

The squads of recruits are the same squads that have been in place since the start of recruit training. The DIs who lead each squad have been training the recruits from the first week. The relationship is intended to promote bonding between the recruits and their DIs.

During the Crucible, the recruits are allowed only four hours of sleep per day. They are provided only two and one-half meals for the entire event. There are no set times for meals, rather, they are taken when time permits. The recruits are issued two meals and the third meal is issued to two recruits who must decide how to best split it between them. The sleep and food deprivation are intended to give the recruits a taste of stress that they might encounter in combat, and it is also intended to add to the team building concept.

Successful completion of the Crucible is a requirement for all recruits to graduate from recruit training. If a recruit fails the Crucible, he or she is sent back to another company in the training cycle to attempt the Crucible again; sent to the Medical Rehabilitation Platoon if injured; or recommended for a discharge if deemed appropriate by the recruits DIs and officers. Recruits are

not required to complete 100 percent of the events of the Crucible but if they do not complete all the events, the decision to let them pass is left up to the recruit's chain of command.

Appendix 1 of Annex G of the Crucible Operations Order addresses the criteria for completion of the Crucible:

1. Show honesty and integrity in the accomplishment of the course. Any breach of integrity, to include lying or cheating, will result in failure of the course. There will be no second chances when integrity is involved.
2. Demonstrate a sincere attempt to accomplish all tasks. A refusal to train will result in a failure of the course. Any recruit who refuses to train will immediately be counseled by a Series Officer, Company First Sergeant, or Company Commander. Should a recruit continue to refuse to train, he will fail the Crucible.
3. Physically progress through all the stations of the course. Should any recruit be injured while completing the Crucible, the Senior Drill Instructor and Series Commander will make recommendations to the Company Commander based on that recruit's performance up to the point of injury. The Company Commander will then recommend the disposition of the recruit to the Battalion Commander for decision.
4. Merit a favorable recommendation by the recruit's Senior Drill Instructor. Any case that includes actions which undermine the goals of the Crucible, or actions which demonstrate a lack of understanding our core values will be dealt with on a case by case basis and may result in the failure of the course. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.)

To fully understand the Crucible, it is necessary to know the published mission and intent of this training

event. In the Crucible Operations Order, the Commanding Officer of Recruit Training Regiment (RTR) has stated the mission and his intent in the conduct of the Crucible. The stated mission and intent is:

**Mission.** To make Marines better warriors through 54 hours of shared hardship, teamwork and examples of our Core Values; to create a personal touchstone that will demonstrate for each and every recruit the limitless nature of what they can endure as an individual and, more importantly, what they can accomplish as a team.

**Commander's Intent.**

Purpose. To complete the recruit training phase of the transformation process and evaluate its success by ensuring that each individual fully understands his duty as a basic Marine. During a culminating event, to demonstrate mastery of the essential knowledge, skills and values expected of a basic Marine. To further provide a defining moment as a touchstone for future reference as to the significance of their accomplishment and basic responsibilities expected of them as a Marine—something they will never forget.

Means. Through the positive leadership and mentorship of their drill instructor and support of their chain of command and Weapons & Field Training Battalion instructors, negotiate as a member of a team, a designated 54-hour course under conditions of sleep and food deprivation. The DI will transition to the role of Platoon Sergeant and the recruit to rifle squad member. The course, designed to test all the essential elements of their training by testing mental, physical, and values fitness through shared hardship and teamwork, will allow the DI to evaluate their successful achievement of approved standards and readiness to enter the Marine Corps. Throughout the conduct of the course, the DI will use the examples of battlefield heroism and teamwork to motivate and inspire squad members to emulate those qualities in their accomplishment of each station and event. Further, he will discuss and reinforce those

qualities by debriefing team and individual execution at the conclusion of each event. Successful completion of the Crucible will be reinforced and recognized through appropriate ceremonies.

End State. At the conclusion of the Crucible, each individual will have been transformed into a basic United States Marine fully imbued with the spirit, character, and understanding of the title Marine and the ability to function successfully in the next phase of their transformation and ultimately in the operational Marine Corps. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.)

### **1. Reveille**

The Crucible starts at 0200 on Thursday morning when the recruits awakened up by the DIs in their barracks. The recruits have 30 minutes to dress and prepare for the start of the Crucible. The previous day, the recruits pack their equipment and prepare their load-bearing vests.<sup>4</sup> By 0230, the DIs have the recruits in formation, packs on their backs, and weapons slung over their shoulders, ready to move to the bivouac site.

The hike to the bivouac site is a short march up a slight hill that takes approximately one-half hour. At the bivouac site, the recruits set up their two-man tents and situate their equipment. At 0400, the recruits hike back down to the area where they started the Crucible. It is at this point the recruits split up into their squads for the remainder of the event.

A Company of recruits break up into a maximum of 32 individual squads. Each squad has a slightly different schedule of events throughout the two and one-half days. For the purposes of this description, the order of events is based upon a schedule of one of the squads picked at random.

By 0550, squads are positioned at their individual starting points. The events of the Crucible actually start at 0600. The first four hours of the Crucible is basically administrative movement and set-up.

Geographically, there are two sections of the Crucible. All the squads complete in round-robin fashion the events on their section of the Crucible for that day, and then they will do the same the next day on the other section. Due to the nature of this design, it is only the luck of the draw that determines what the schedule will be for each squad. Some squads might get a very demanding sequence of events, while other squads get a sequence of events that might allow some rest time. Either way, comparison of the sequence of events is all relative; the easiest sequence is still very demanding. Another factor that cannot be planned for is the weather. The degree of misery of the Crucible is multiplied if the weather is less than

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<sup>4</sup> Load Bearing Vests are used to carry ammunition/magazines for their

desirable. However, the Crucible will still be conducted in poor weather, as long as the safety of the recruits is not jeopardized.

## **2. Warrior Station-Jenkins Pinnacle**

This station is scheduled to last 35 minutes; five minutes to brief the station, 25 minutes to complete the exercise, and a five-minute debrief. The DI has his squad listen as he briefs the situation and reads the background of the Marine the event is named after.<sup>5</sup> The following is a typical background brief for this event:

This event is named for Private First Class (PFC) Jenkins, who earned the Medal of Honor in 1969 at Fire Support Base Argonne, Vietnam. PFC Jenkins was a machine gunner with a 12-man reconnaissance team from 3<sup>rd</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion. The 12-man team was occupying a defensive position when they were suddenly attacked by a North Vietnamese platoon. Jenkins and another Marine were in a two man fighting hole, when a grenade was thrown into their location. Jenkins pushed the other Marine down and placed himself between the grenade and the Marine. Jenkins took the full impact of the explosion, giving his life to save the other Marine. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.)

The DI then gives the mission of the station to the recruits, the safety rules, and equipment they wear while conducting the station.

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weapons and other personal combat equipment.

<sup>5</sup> Each Warrior Station has a picture of the Marine that it is named after and a copy of the official citation of the Medal of Honor. The official citation is either read by all the recruits or read aloud by one recruit to the others.

This station consists of two logs suspended by cables from a log frame. The bottom log is about five feet off the ground, and the second log is another five feet above the first log. Both logs are unstable and swing back and forth. The recruits' mission is for the squad to get over both logs with all their equipment and weapons. The recruits cannot use the cables for support and they can have no more than two people on the obstacle at one time. They are also forbidden to steady the bottom log, and the recruits on the ground cannot help the others get over the logs. The recruits are given three minutes to decide how they are to accomplish the mission, and subsequently brief their plan to the DI.

The recruits then negotiate the obstacle through their own plan and leadership. The field hat or their DI squad leader only interrupts them if their plan is not working at all or there is an unsafe practice. After 25 minutes, the recruits are stopped whether or not they completed the obstacle.

The DI conducts the debrief with his squad through a guided discussion, but the recruits do most of the talking. The DI helps them establish what happened; asks questions to determine what was right and wrong with what happened; and determines how the task should be done differently next

time. During the debrief, the DI usually reinforces both teamwork and core values that were exhibited by PFC Jenkins and how it relates to the obstacle and the recruits' performance. One of the core value lessons for this obstacle is "courage-loyalty: steady reliability to do one's duty." (United States Marine Corps 1997)

### **3. Warrior Station-Timmerman's Tank**

This is another 35-minute station, with a five-minute brief, 25 minutes for the obstacle, and a five-minute debrief. The DI gives the background brief on the Marine the station is named after. This brief contains the following information:

This event is named after Sergeant Timmerman who earned the Medal of Honor while serving with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 6<sup>th</sup> Marines during the Battle of Saipan, 1944, during World War II. Sgt. Timmerman was in his tank moving with infantry units in support of an attack on a enemy position. Sgt. Timmerman ordered the infantry to halt while his tank engaged a target. While Sgt. Timmerman stood in the open tank turret, an enemy grenade was thrown onto the turret. Before it could drop into the tank, Sgt. Timmerman grabbed the grenade and took the brunt of the explosion with his own body. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.)

The recruits are divided into two teams of eight people and they have to walk on two wooden rails together from a start point to a finish point. This mission seems very easy, but in practice is very difficult. The recruits are made to wear gas masks, so it is difficult to communicate

with each other. The wooden rails each have eight ropes for the recruits to hold onto to raise the rails. If the any of the ropes hit the ground, they cannot be used for the remainder of the exercise. Also, if any recruit falls over and touches the ground, the entire team must start over again.

Again, the recruits are given three minutes to plan their actions and brief it back to the DI. At first, most teams have a hard time getting started. Either recruits lose their balance and touch the ground or they drop the rope. They usually have a few unsuccessful first attempts until they get the hang of walking in unison and communicating through gas masks.

The debrief follows the same format as the last warrior station. The DI emphasizes in the debrief that it takes teamwork, coordination, patience, cooperation, remaining calm, and listening to the team leader. The DI might point out if the team had difficulty that they need to take a step back, regain their composure, learn from their mistakes, adjust the plan and never give up (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.).

#### **4. Core Values Class #1**

By this time, it is 0730 and the recruits have only completed two warrior stations and are only five and half-hours into the Crucible.

The next event is a core values class. This is conducted with the DI and his squad. There are no physical elements to this event. The first core values class is the "Who Am I?" guided discussion class (all squads have this as their first of three core value classes no matter where they are in the Crucible).

Every recruit is given two minutes to talk about his personal life to the rest of his squad. Topics of discussion might include, where the recruit is from; the recruit's hobbies; how many brothers/sisters the recruit has; when the recruit was born; why the recruit wanted to be a Marine and if that reason has changed since training started eleven weeks ago; if anybody in their family has ever been in the military or in the Marine Corps; the single event in their life that has had the greatest impact upon them and why; what do they expect from the Marine Corps; and/or what do they expect to contribute to the Marine Corps. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.)

##### **5. Reaction Course Problems #2, 3, 4, 5, 6**

The next set of events for the recruits is five stations of the reaction course. The reaction course is a set of problems that emphasizes thinking and teamwork. The reaction course problems on the Crucible are very similar to the reaction course problems at Officer Candidate School in Quantico, VA.

Each problem takes approximately 20 minutes; each has a two minute brief, thirteen minutes for the exercise, and 5 minutes for the debrief. For each problem, one of the recruits will be chosen as the team leader and be responsible for formulating a plan. Other recruits are encouraged to offer advice to the team leader to formulate the plan.

The problems usually deal with bringing supplies, food, water, ammunition or injured personnel across a destroyed bridge, through a sewer system, over a wall, or over a culvert. To complete the problem, the recruits are usually given some sort of supplies to cross the obstacle, which can consist of ropes, planks, stretchers, pipes, and ladders. There are sections of the problem that are painted red, which is off limits and if a recruit touches the red area with his body then he can no longer be a participant for that problem.

The reaction course problems are designed so that the emphasis of the problem is not on the completion, but the formation, of the plan and teamwork. The problems are intellectual exercises and physical stamina is not as important as mental stamina. The DIs only add input to the recruit's plan if it is unsafe or their plan is totally inadequate. Otherwise, the DIs act as safety observers and judges to determine if the recruits break any of the rules of the problem.

As with the warrior stations, the debriefs are of the same format. If the recruits do not complete the problem, or if they could have completed the problem, but ran out of time, the DIs tell them the proper solution.

At the end of the last reaction course problem, all of the recruits undergo a medical check with a Navy hospital corpsman. The corpsman inspects the recruits' feet for blisters and other injuries. The corpsman also gives a short class in proper hydration and other measures to prevent injury or dehydration.

#### **6. Warrior Station-Cukela's Wall**

This is 30-minute station, with a five-minute brief, 20 minutes for the obstacle, and a five-minute debrief. The DI gives the background brief on the Marine the station is

named after. This brief contains the following information:

This station is named after Sergeant Cukela, a Serbian immigrant to the United States in 1913. He earned the Medal of Honor while serving with the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment in France during World War I. He single-handedly advanced and attacked a Germany strongpoint, working his way to the rear of the enemy position. Using German hand grenades, he attacked and captured two machine guns and four German troops. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.)

The mission is to get the entire team, with their equipment, over a 20-foot wall. The wall is configured so that there is a platform at the top, and a rope for the recruits to get back down to the ground after they complete the obstacle. Only two recruits may be on the platform at one time. Recruits usually get over the wall by building a human ladder of some sort. The problem comes when the last two recruits must get over the wall. These last two recruits must be tall and strong if they want to make it over the wall. The last recruit usually makes it over the wall if the recruit on the platform makes a rope out of the belts from the other recruits. Then, the last recruit climbs the wall with the belts while being pulled up at the same time.

The debrief is the same format as the other warrior stations. The special emphasis of this debrief is on

teamwork and the situation of Sgt. Cukela being a recent immigrant to the United States.

### **7. Warrior Station-Anderson's Fall**

This is another 30-minute station, with a five-minute brief, 20 minutes for the obstacle, and a five-minute debrief. The DI gives the background brief on the Marine the station is named after:

This station is named after Private First Class Anderson, who earned the Medal of Honor in Vietnam while serving with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 3<sup>rd</sup> Marines in 1967. While moving with his platoon, Anderson's found himself with other Marines pinned down by enemy machine gun fire. His position was only 20 meters from the enemy, when a grenade was thrown into their position. Anderson pulled the grenade under his body and absorbed the explosion saving his fellow Marines. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.)

This station is a team-building station based on trust. The recruits fall backwards off of an elevated table into the arms of their fellow recruits. This station is similar to trust exercises found in such civilian programs as Outward Bound, etc. Usually, the DI takes part in this exercise to show the recruits that he trusts them with his well being.

This debrief focuses on teamwork, cooperation, trust, confidence, and dependability. Another aspect of the debrief can focus on the fact that PFC Anderson was the first African-American Marine to earn the Medal of Honor

(Woulfe 1998). The DI might talk about diversity and minorities in the Marine Corps during this debrief to reinforce the judgement of all Marines is based on their performance, not their ethnic background.

#### **8. Warrior Station-Mackie's Passage**

This is another 30-minute station, with a five-minute brief, 20 minutes for the obstacle, and a five-minute debrief. The DI gives the brief on the Marine the station is named after information:

This station is named after Corporal Mackie who earned the Medal of Honor while serving on the USS Galena during the Civil War in 1862. Cpl. Mackie fearlessly maintained musket fire against rifle pits as enemy fire raked the deck of his ship. He also manned cannons when their crewmembers were either wounded or killed. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.)

The mission of this obstacle is to get all of the recruits, with their equipment, through a tire suspended by cables to the other side. The recruits are not allowed to touch the cables, touch the red (off-limits) areas, touch the inside tire well with their hands or feet, or jump/dive through the tire, and they must land feet first.

This obstacle is supposed to simulate a porthole on a ship. The recruits must get through the porthole to a lifeboat before the ship sinks. As in Cukela's Wall, the last two recruits to get through the tire presents a problem. The second to the last recruit usually is small

and light so he can be lifted by the other recruit and passed through the tire. The last recruit usually finds it very difficult to get through the tire without diving. One method for the last recruit to get through the tire might be for the recruit to do a handstand and let his legs fall backwards into the tire and then have the recruits on the other side hold his legs and help him through the tire (Woulfe 1998).

The debrief for this obstacle focuses on dependability, trust, determination, confidence, planning, and discipline. The DI might also focus on marksmanship, which the recruits had learned just two weeks earlier, as that was the one of the qualities that helped Cpl. Mackie earn his Medal of Honor.

#### **9. Warrior Station-Gonzalez' Crossing**

This is 35-minute station, with a five-minute brief, 25 minutes for the obstacle, and a five-minute debrief. The DI's background brief on the Marine the station is named after contains the following information:

This station is named after Sergeant (SGT.) Gonzalez, who earned the Medal of Honor while serving with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Regiment during the Vietnam War in 1968. During the Battle of Hue City, his unit was conducting convoy operations, when a Marine was wounded and fell to the ground, SGT. Gonzalez rescued him and in the process was wounded. Even though he was badly wounded, SGT. Gonzalez kept on fighting through the battle. While he fearlessly moved from

position to position to direct the efforts of his Marines and he successfully knocked out an enemy rocket position and much of the enemy force, SGT. Gonzalez was hit by enemy fire and mortally wounded. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.)

The mission of this obstacle is for the recruits and their equipment to get from one platform to a second platform, and then finally to a third platform while wearing their gas masks. The recruits are to get to each platform by swinging on a rope. Their equipment cannot be thrown to the other platforms, nor can they tie equipment to the rope. If a recruit touches the ground, he must start over. When the recruits first start to swing across the tables, they realize the rope swings at an angle that does not make it easy to reach the table. The scenario is supposed to represent a contaminated area and as such they are required to wear their gas masks, which complicates their communications.

The debrief discusses the need for a good plan, teamwork, cooperation, creativity, coordination, and trust. The DIs might also discuss that SGT. Gonzalez demonstrated amazing commitment to his men by staying in command of the platoon after being wounded twice in four days. The DI might relate his situation to the pain the recruits might have while participating in the Crucible. Another aspect of the debrief might be commitment and the concern for

people; that everyone is of value, regardless of race, national origin, religion or gender (United States Marine Corps 1997).

#### **10. Bayonet Assault Course**

This course is the traditional bayonet assault course that was included in the recruit training curriculum before the Crucible. The course is now completed as a portion of the Crucible.

In teams of four, with one of the recruits as the team leader, the recruits run and assault practice dummies with plastic training rifles. The unique thing about the bayonet assault course is that the recruits no longer use bayonets during the course. This practice was instituted for safety reasons so recruits would not injure themselves.

The recruits start out in the prone position, then on command from their team leader they assault the first row of dummies, and then run to a concrete pit behind the first set of dummies. The recruits do the same as before to the next row of dummies, and so on until they complete the course. There is also a concrete pipe the recruits must crawl through to complete the course. During the course, the recruits yell loudly and are encouraged to show fighting spirit. The course is tiring but motivating and intended for the recruits to be aggressive. Teamwork is

emphasized as the proper method to assault though the obstacles.

### **11. Core Values Class #2**

At the completion of the bayonet assault course, the recruits go into a tent to discuss their second core values class of the Crucible. The second core values class is about teamwork. As with the first class, this class is also a guided discussion. Each recruit is afforded the opportunity to participate in the discussion.

The DIs start the discussion by relating how the obstacles in the Crucible cannot be accomplished without teamwork. The DIs talk about factors that are counter-productive to teamwork, such as sexism, racism, and individualism. Other factors that the DI might probe into that are an obstacle to teamwork are substance abuse, child abuse, hazing, harassment, etc. It is during these discussions that DIs might relate their own Marine Corps experiences with teamwork or those factors that might be counter-productive to teamwork.

### **12. Day Movement Course**

As with the Bayonet Assault Course, the Day Movement Course was included in the old curriculum of recruit training. This course consists of barbed wire obstacles, walls, mud, and ditches of water. One of the recruits is

identified as a casualty that the rest of the team must evacuate to a waiting helicopter in less than 25 minutes.

Along with the recruit who is a casualty, the team is given heavy ammunition cans and crates to carry to the waiting helicopter. To simulate combat, trip flares are placed on the course to simulate booby traps that Marines might encounter in combat. If a recruit happens to trip one of these flares he is also considered a casualty and must be carried by the rest of his team to the helicopter. To add even more realism to this event, a hulk of an old Marine Corps helicopter is used as the finishing point of the course.

The course is designed to replicate a combat situation for the recruits. They must fight a time limit while evacuating one of their own teammates, all while encountering unexpected obstacles. The key to this event is that the only way to successfully complete their mission in the specified time limit while under stress and physical fatigue is through teamwork.

### **13. Day Infiltration Course**

As with the Day Movement Course, the Day Infiltration Course is a holdover from the old recruit training curriculum. This course is also supposed to replicate a combat situation with recruits crawling through barbed wire

obstacles, concrete pipes, and muddy ditches. The course includes a sprinkler system to keep it wet and muddy; it is impossible for a recruit to finish the course without being totally cold, wet, and miserable. The recruits are also given heavy ammunition cans to carry (drag) through the course. The object of the course is to simulate the conditions Marines might encounter when they attack a fortified position.

Another surprise during the course is that one of their teammates is designated as a casualty who must be carried through the remainder of the course. While all of this happening, pneumatic machine guns fire over the heads of the recruits and simulated explosions are set off during the course. The course simulates the sights, sounds, and smell of combat.

#### **14. Warrior Station-Basilone's Challenge**

This is 35-minute station, with a five-minute brief, 25 minutes for the obstacle, and a five-minute debrief. The DI gives this brief on the Marine the station is named after:

This station is named after Sergeant Basilone, who earned the Medal of Honor while serving with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment during the Battle of Guadalcanal in World War II. As the leader of two machine gun sections under heavy fire from the enemy, SGT. Basilone single-handily moved an extra machine gun into position after the first one was knocked out

of action. Then he repaired another machine gun and personally manned it himself. SGT. Basilone gallantly held his line and moved through hostile lines to secure badly needed shells for his gunners. His efforts contributed to the virtual annihilation of a Japanese regiment. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.)

The object of this obstacle is for all of the recruits to get over a horizontal log that is approximately eight feet above the ground. Two vertical logs support the horizontal log, such that it resembles a huge wooden soccer goal. The recruits are given heavy ammunition cans and crates to carry over the obstacle. The recruits are also forbidden to touch the vertical logs while climbing over the obstacle.

As with the other warrior stations, it is usually very difficult for the last recruit to make it over the obstacle. Usually, two recruits sit on the vertical log to help the recruits up and over the obstacle. But with the last recruit, he must try to jump up to the two recruits so they can pull him up. Unfortunately, the last recruit gets tired after a few attempts and is difficult to grab onto with all the mud on his uniform.

The debrief focuses on teamwork and planning. The DI might also discuss a fear of heights and the ability to overcome fears to complete the mission. Another aspect the DI might discuss is overcoming the lack of food and sleep

to complete the mission, just as SGT. Basilone did to complete his mission (United States Marine Corps 1997).

#### **15. Warrior Station-Garcia's Leap**

This is another 35-minute station, with a five-minute brief, 25 minutes for the obstacle, and a five-minute debrief. The DI provides the brief on the Marine the station is named after:

This station is named after Private First Class Garcia, who earned the Medal of Honor while serving with 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines during the Korean War in 1952. While defending a position located more than a mile in front of enemy lines, PFC Garcia braved intense hostile enemy fire trying to reach a supply point to obtain more grenades. While moving to the supply point with another Marine, an enemy grenade landed nearby. To save his fellow Marine PFC Garcia threw his body on the grenade and took the full impact of the explosion. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.)

The mission of this obstacle is for the recruits to stand on a post, dive out, and attempt to touch a bar suspended by cables; the obstacle resembles a trapeze. The bar is about ten feet above the ground and the post is about fifteen feet from the bar. The way the obstacle is designed, it is impossible to reach the bar, subsequently the rest of the team must catch the recruit before he falls to the ground.

This station is closely related to Anderson's Fall; the obstacle is an exercise of trust for the recruits. The DI

usually takes part in this exercise, to show the recruits that he trusts them not to let him fall and be injured.

The same values and lessons that are discussed in Anderson's fall are also discussed in this debrief. Unique items in this obstacle that the DI might emphasize are that PFC Garcia was a Hispanic Marine from Puerto Rico, and in a little over a year he went from being a civilian file clerk to a Marine in combat in Korea.

#### **16. Night Infiltration Course**

By 1800 on the first day, all the squads have finished their round robin events and they come together as a unit to participate in the night infiltration course. All the squad should reach the course by 1830 and the recruits are given one-half hour to conduct weapons maintenance and to receive reinforcement of their Core Value lessons.

By 1900, the squads are formed up to start the night infiltration course. This course is the same course as the day infiltration course, except it is now completed under the darkness of night. However, by this time the recruits are tired, cold, and hungry. The recruits go through the same scenario as they did during the day, except that whenever a flare is launched the recruits have to lie still in either mud or water until the flare has died out. The launching of flares slows down the movement of the recruits

significantly. Thus, when the recruits finish the course they are thoroughly wet, cold, and muddy.

### **17. End of First Day**

When all of the squads finish the infiltration course, they hike approximately three miles back to their bivouac site, which they last saw early that morning at the start of the Crucible. By 2300, the whole company is at the bivouac site. Before the recruits are allowed to sleep at 2300, they are given time to use the facilities for hygienic purposes and change out of their wet and muddy uniforms. The recruits are given four hours of sleep and are wakened at 0300 to start their second day of the Crucible.

From 0300 to 0430, the recruits are given time to prepare for the day's activities and change into dry, clean, uniforms. Then, from 0430 to 0530, the recruits hike to the start of the first event of the day.

### **18. Core Values Class #3**

This core values class is conducted in the same format as the other two classes. The focus of this class is on teamwork. The emphasis on this class is: how am I? /how are we doing? The class is intended to act as a self-analysis/group analysis station for the recruits to reflect on how they are members of a team. They will discuss how

they are contributing to the team efforts, either negatively or positively. The DIs are cautioned not to let the recruits verbally backstab their fellow recruits. Only constructive criticism is allowed; assault on a recruit's character is forbidden.

#### **19. Confidence Course Station #3 - The Weaver**

This is the first station of the day for the squad. The weaver is a very physically challenging obstacle and the recruits are given only 25 minutes to get the squad through the obstacle. The obstacle resembles a huge three-dimensional A-frame. It was constructed of vertical and horizontal crossed logs positioned to resemble railroad tracks. The logs rise at a forty-five degree angle to a height of 20 feet. The recruits have to go under one log and over the next all the way to the top of the obstacle, and then the recruits go back down the other side to the bottom. The recruits are also given two heavy ammunition cans to carry over the obstacle; to complete the obstacle every recruit must help each other to get the cans across the logs (Woulfe 1998).

#### **20. Confidence Course Station #4 - Stairway to Heaven**

The mission of this station is to get a case of radio batteries over the obstacle and to the bottom of the other side. This obstacle is designed to resemble a huge wooden

ladder. There are twelve rungs spaced three to four feet apart. Several portions of the rungs are painted red, as they are off-limits to the recruits. Only two recruits climb to the top of the obstacle. The recruits are given ropes and four locking 'D' rings to assist in hauling the case up and over the obstacle. The recruits on the ground form a "mule" team and pull the weight of the load to the top of the obstacle, and the two recruits at the top manipulate the load over the top rung and lower the case of batteries to the other side (Woulfe 1998).

#### **21. Reaction Course Problems #11 & 12**

The reaction course problems in this area are constructed in the same design as the earlier reaction course problems. The conduct of recruits on the reaction course problems is also the same as in the earlier problems.

The first problem has the recruits moving a barrel of decontamination material across a fence. All team members are required to get across the fence with all of their equipment. The recruits are forbidden to touch the red off-limits areas and if the recruit or any equipment do touch the red areas, the whole team must start over.

The second problem has the recruits moving an injured team member and a drum of simulated plutonium across a

makeshift bridge. To complicate the obstacle, the drum must remain upright at all times and all the recruits must cross the obstacle. To complete the obstacle, the recruits must use the buddy system to pass the barrel and injured team member over the bridge while avoiding the red areas.

As in the earlier reaction course problems, the emphasis is not on completing the mission in the allotted time, but how the recruits performed as a team. The other aspects that the recruits are judged on are how well they formulated their plan, if the appointed leader was doing an effective job, and if the other recruits were following his orders.

## **22. Warrior Station-Noonan's Casualty Evacuation**

This is a 35-minute station, with a five-minute brief, 25 minutes for the obstacle, and a five-minute debrief. The DI gives the background brief on the Marine the station is named after. This brief contains the following information:

This station is named after Lance Corporal (LCPL) Noonan, who earned the Medal of Honor while serving with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Marines during the Vietnam War in 1969. Noonan's unit came under heavy enemy fire and the enemy fire wounded several Marines. LCPL Noonan dashed across the hazardous terrain and began dragging the most seriously wounded to safety. Although wounded by an enemy round and knocked to the ground, Noonan continued to drag his fellow Marine to safety. Noonan was unable to complete the evacuation of his fellow Marine before he died, but his actions

inspired his fellow Marines to initiate a spirited assault that forced the enemy to withdraw. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.)

The mission of this obstacle is to carry a simulated injured team member to safety. The recruits are broken down into four man teams, with another recruit as the injured person. The DI usually picks the larger recruits to act as the injured team member to teach the lesson that you cannot pick who will be wounded in combat. The recruits then carry the injured recruit on a stretcher over a three-quarter-mile course. The recruits usually tire quickly and must stop often to rotate positions on the stretcher.

The debrief is in the same format as the other warrior stations. During the debrief, the DI focuses on the teamwork, trust, cooperation, and endurance that it takes to complete the evacuation. He points out that when transporting wounded personnel, whether in combat or training, it must be accomplished in the safest and most expedient manner so that medical attention to the victim can be rendered quickly.

### **23. Obstacle Course**

This is a 35-minute station, with a five-minute brief, 25 minutes for the exercise, and a five-minute debrief. This obstacle course is a standard Marine Corps obstacle

course found at any Marine Corps base or station. The course consists of several log and raised bar obstacles, with a final rope climb. The twist to this station is that the recruits must negotiate the course as a team, while transporting a simulated casualty on a stretcher and heavy ammunition crates and cans. All of the recruits must go over every obstacle, to include the simulated wounded person on the stretcher.

#### **24. Warrior Station-Laville's Duty**

This is a unique warrior station in that it is the only warrior station not named for a Marine who earned the Medal of Honor, and it is the only station named for a female Marine.

This is another 35-minute station, with a five-minute brief, 25 minutes for the obstacle, and a five-minute debrief. The DI gives the following background:

Corporal Laville was a graduate of Louisiana State University and was a teacher in her local community. In 1943, she wanted to represent her family in the war effort, so she enlisted in the Woman's Reserve. She was assigned as an aerial gunnery instructor, at a newly completed facility. When the facility caught on fire, she went back into the building and tried to help others escape. Unfortunately, she perished in the fire and was last seen helping others to safety. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.)

The mission of this obstacle is for the team to get from one platform to another platform by using hanging

tires. At first the obstacle actually looks fun, but by halfway across the recruits become tired and sore. If a recruit touches the ground with any part of his body, he is considered dead.

During the debrief, the DI discusses the roles of women in the Marine Corps and their important contributions. The DI stresses that there is no difference between male and female Marines. He also points out that to complete the obstacle it took teamwork, endurance, communication, patience, and determination.

#### **25. Warrior Station-Howard's Maze**

This is a 45-minute station, with a five-minute brief, 35 minutes for the obstacle, and a five-minute debrief. The DI briefs the following information:

This station is named after Staff Sergeant (SSGT) Howard, who earned the Medal of Honor while serving with 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion during the Vietnam War in 1966. SSGT Howard was the acting platoon leader, when a North Vietnamese Army Battalion assaulted his team of eighteen men. Although outnumbered, he directed his team to defend their position. SSGT Howard moved from position to position, providing dynamic leadership and courageous fighting spirit to his men. Despite being struck by a hand grenade and unable to move his legs, he distributed ammunition and skillfully directed artillery and aircraft strikes on the enemy. When rescue helicopters proceeded to Howard's position the next morning, he waved them off continuing to call air strikes and small arms fire on the enemy, making the landing zones as secure as possible. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.)

This obstacle is constructed as a big rope spider web. The object of this obstacle is to pass each recruit through holes in the web with all of their equipment. The web has bells attached to the ropes and if a recruit causes one of the bells to ring, then that recruit must start over again. Once one of the holes has been used, it cannot be used again to pass other recruits through it.

During the debrief, the DI talks about the need for a good plan before starting the obstacle, and the need for a back-up plan. He will discuss how it took innovation, trust, communication, initiative, cooperation and teamwork to complete the obstacle. He might also discuss that it is important to never give up, despite overwhelming odds.

#### **26. Warrior Station-Bordelon's Assault**

This is another 45-minute station, with a five-minute brief, 35 minutes for the obstacle, and a five-minute debrief. The DI gives the background brief on the Marine the station is named after. This brief contains the following information:

This station is named after Staff Sergeant Bordelon, who earned the Medal of Honor while serving with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Marines during the Battle of Tarawa in 1943. SSGT Bordelon was a combat engineer who landed in the initial assault of Tarawa. He personally destroyed two Japanese pillboxes with demolition charges, and was wounded on his way to a third pillbox. Wounded and out of ammunition, he found a rifle and provided cover fire for a group of men

scaling a sea wall. Then he rescued two men who were stranded in the water. Refusing first aid, he made another demolition charge and single-handily assaulted a fourth Japanese machine gun position. SSGT Bordelon was killed instantly upon taking a final burst of machine gun fire from the enemy. (Marine Corps Recruit Depot n.d.)

This station has a two-part mission. The first mission is to lift a tire and place it around a twenty-foot telephone pole. The second mission is to remove the tire from around the pole. The recruits have nothing to climb up to the slick telephone pole beside themselves. The recruits are forbidden to throw or drop the tire around the pole. When they remove the tire, they must change positions, such that the same recruits who climb to the top of the pole may not repeat their jobs.

The recruits usually make a human ladder around the pole, with a ring of recruits as a base and others climbing on their shoulder to erect another level, and finally one recruit climbs on their shoulders to reach the top of the pole. Then, the whole exercise is repeated in reverse, but with the jobs switched for the recruits.

During the debrief, the DI discusses that it took coordination, cooperation, and teamwork to complete the obstacle. He emphasizes that not only was it a physical challenge, but also a mental challenge to complete the obstacle.

## **27. Three Mile Hike**

At this point, the squad forms up and hikes for three miles to the firing range. The hike is a basic military forced march, except the recruits are physically and mentally tired by this point. When the recruits reach the firing range, they undergo another medical check. This check is done in the same manner as the one conducted the day prior. The hospital corpsman again inspects the recruit's feet and makes sure they are using foot powder and changing into dry socks. The corpsman will also be on the lookout for recruits who might be trying to hide injuries so that they will not be pulled from the Crucible.

After the medical check, the recruits are given time for weapons maintenance. The recruits conduct user maintenance on their service rifles; cleaning the operating parts and ensuring that their rifles are in working order before they fire them on the field firing range.

## **28. Team Shoot**

The team shoot is done on a field firing range, composed of targets at different ranges and positions. The recruits fire from several hasty firing positions, such as from a window, on top of a roof, from a bunker, etc. The targets fall when hit, so the recruits have instant feedback if they are using proper marksmanship skills. The

recruits are timed and scored based on the number of targets hit, rounds fired, and rounds saved. The DIs make sure the recruits know the importance of well-aimed shots, that every round fired counts, and that weapons must be kept clean and functioning.

## **29. Pugil Sticks**

As soon as the recruits complete the field firing, they take part in pugil stick bouts. A pugil stick looks like a big Q-tip with pads on each end. The pugil sticks are supposed to represent combat with a rifle and bayonet. The recruits wear helmets and other protective equipment. The recruits of one squad will fight recruits from another squad, thus reinforcing the squad team concept.

The pugil stick bouts take place in a large dirt circle, with the DIs acting as referees. The bouts are two men on two men. When one recruit is "killed" with a blow to the head, the survivor fights outnumbered two to one. The recruits fight three separate bouts, one after another with no breaks. Each bout lasts several minutes, completely exhausting the recruits by the time they are over. The rotation of fights is arranged so that the first fight is against two recruits on their third fight. Fight number two is an even match, with each group on their second fight. The final fight is against a fresh team.

This leads to the recruits fighting two less exhausted men when they are the most tired. The fights only became harder as the recruits became weaker (Woulfe 1998).

### **30. Reaction Course Problems #7, 8, 9, 10**

The reaction course problems the recruits encounter at this point are completed in the same format as the earlier reaction course problems. The problem that the recruits are facing now is that they have only slept for four hours out of the 36 hours they have completed of the Crucible. The recruits now face four more mental challenges, but are extremely tired and they find it harder to stay awake, even standing up.

The missions the recruits face in these sets of problems are moving a barrel of simulated observation equipment over a tank trap bounded by a minefield; crossing a blown-out bridge using a wooden plank to deliver critical explosives; crossing another blown out bridge to deliver crates of communications equipment using wooden planks that are not long enough; and entering an enemy area to blow it up using simulated explosives. They must cross two fences that have a simulated alarm system and are simulated to be electrified on the lower portions of the fence.

### **31. Confidence Course Station #1-Sky Scraper**

This obstacle is constructed to simulate a bombed out three story building. The only way up the building is by climbing on the outside of the building floor by floor. The building is constructed so that the next higher level is slightly bowed out from the level under it. The only method to climb the floors is to grab or jump up to the next level and pull yourself up. Once the recruits reach the top, they descend the building using a cargo net.

The mission for the team is to rescue a Marine (mannequin) who has been shot by a sniper on the top floor. The wounded Marine must be lowered carefully from the building so that he can receive medical attention. Once the recruits reach the top of the building, some of them descend partially down the cargo net. Then, they pass the mannequin down from one recruit to another until it reaches the ground.

Even though this obstacle seems somewhat easy, by this time the recruits are weak from fatigue and lack of food. Some recruits must overcome their fear of heights to complete this obstacle since all recruits must climb to the top of the building.

### **32. Confidence Course Station #2-Two Line Bridge**

This obstacle consists of two ropes suspended parallel to each other a few feet off of the ground, running for about 50 feet. The recruits use the ropes as a two-line bridge to cross a simulated river to deliver critical ammunition. The recruits were given heavy crates to simulate the ammunition; the crates were heavy enough to prevent a recruit from carrying them alone without falling from the bridge. The idea behind this obstacle was to use teamwork and planning since brute force would not solve the problem.

### **33. Night Resupply Hike**

By 1800 on the second day, all of the squads have completed their daytime events. The recruits hike back to their bivouac site and conduct weapons maintenance; eat whatever they have left of their meals; use the facilities for hygienic purposes, and prepare for the night resupply hike.

At 2100, the recruits hike a mile and one-half to a site where heavy ammunition cans and crates are located. The object of the hike is to deliver the crates and cans back to their bivouac site. Again, the can and crates were heavy enough that recruits had to take turns to carry them the distance. This hike is another exercise in teamwork

and a physical challenge. By the time they start the hike, all recruits are exhausted and feeling some kind of pain in their bodies. The hike is just added misery the recruits have to endure before they can sleep in preparation for the final day of the Crucible.

Once all the recruits are finished for the evening, they return to the bivouac site for much-needed sleep. The recruits are allowed to sleep from 2300 to 0300. When the recruits awake, they have only a few more hours until the Crucible is completed and they earn the title of Marine.

#### **34. Grim Reaper Hike/Marine Corps Emblem Ceremony**

While it is still dark, the entire Recruit Company forms up for its final physical challenge of the Crucible. The recruits, DIs and company staff all hike to the site of the Marine Corps Emblem Ceremony. But, before they can reach that destination, the recruits have to tackle their last hike and the formidable "Grim Reaper" hill.

In the dark, the company hikes for about an hour down a dirt trail until they reach the first rest point. The recruits are instructed to drink water and adjust their equipment. Then, the company marches for about another 45 minutes until they reach the last rest point before they climb the "Grim Reaper." During this break, the company and series honormen are recognized and given the American

and Marine Corps flags to carry up the hill and to be raised at the Emblem Ceremony.<sup>6</sup> It is during this break that the Company Commander addresses the recruits for the last time as "recruits" and delivers a motivating speech to forge their spirits to complete the "Grim Reaper."

As the recruits start their ascent up the "Grim Reaper" the sun is just rising and gives an almost spiritual reverence to the recruits' hard climb. The first stage of the hill is the steepest section of the climb. Many of the recruits can feel their muscles ache and strain in their tired and exhausted bodies. As the formation climbs up the hill, recruits fall back and slow down, but do not give up. Recruits yell and offer encouragement or physically assist their fellow recruits to climb the hill.

After approximately fifteen minutes of continuous uphill hiking, the formation stops just before a slight rise. The reason for this short break is so that the recruits can form back up into a proper military formation and not a bedraggled mob. Just over the rise is the completion of the hike and the Emblem Ceremony.

As the recruits climb the short rise, they can see that they have made the hike and completed the Crucible. As

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<sup>6</sup>The honor-men are the recruits that have performed the best during recruit training based on various quantitative and qualitative measures.

they proudly march down the slight hill; flags of all 50 states are lined up on the sides of the trail. The recruits are then formed up into a position on the hilltop to look out into the Pacific Ocean as the sun is rising over their shoulders.

The Marine Corps Emblem ceremony starts with a chaplain offering a prayer and then the company First Sergeant delivers a congratulatory speech to soon-to-be Marines. Then, the honor-men are called forward to raise the American and Marine Corps flags as the formation salutes the colors.

Finally, after eleven weeks and 54 hours of the Crucible, the First Sergeant orders the DIs to make the recruits Marines. With Lee Greenwood's, "God Bless the USA" playing in the background, each DI presents the new Marines with a black metal eagle, globe, and anchor emblem in their left hands while shaking their right hand. As the DIs do this presentation, they are quietly talking and congratulating the new Marines on their accomplishments. It is not uncommon for either the new Marines or the DIs to have tears in their eyes.

After all the emblems have been presented, the ceremony concludes with the Company of Marines singing the Marine's

Hymn. Even though the Marines are dirty, tired, and hungry they sing with great pride and gusto.

Finally, the Marines are marched back down to their bivouac site to pack up their camp and eat a "Warriors'" breakfast. During the breakfast the Marines are allowed to eat all they want and to take their time as they eat. Both the DIs and officers sit with the Marines and eat breakfast with them. Despite the pain, dirt, and lack of sleep the new Marines are all smiles.

The final part of the Crucible is the Commandant's video and the presentation of the Core Values card. The video is a motivating congratulatory speech by the Marine Corps' Commandant to the new Marines. The Core Values card resembles a credit card, but instead of the name of a bank and an account number, it is emblazoned with the Marine Corps' core values of honor, courage, and commitment. The reverse of the card has eight points that Marines uphold as being important to being a good Marine. The card is supposed to stay on the Marine at all times, just as a dogtag is always on the body of a Marine.

This chapter provided an in-depth overview of the workings and content of the Crucible with a focus on descriptions of each event and obstacle. The next chapter

presents a review of relevant organizational training theories and a theoretical analysis.



## IV. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

### A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a review of some training and motivation theories and an analysis of the Crucible based on the theories. The analysis is based on ideas about goal setting, expectancies, reinforcement, team-building, and organizational rites and ceremonies. The topic of interest for this chapter is, is the Crucible effective as compared to accepted theories.

### B. TRAINING ENVIRONMENT THEORIES

The following training environment theories were selected on the basis of being the most relevant to the Crucible. Many of these theories are reflected in the methods that guide the running of the Crucible and in the perceptions of the Recruit Training Regiment staff.

#### 1. Goal Setting and Motivation Theory

The goal setting and motivation theory states that, "... specific and challenging goals lead to higher performance than easy goals, do-your-best goals, or no goal." (Locke, Shaw, Saari and Latham 1981) The developers of the theory also list some important conditions that affect performance:

1. Individuals who are given specific, hard, or challenging goals perform better than those given

easy goals, do-best goals, or no goals at all.

2. Goals appear to have more predictable effects when they are given in specific terms rather than as a vague set of intentions.
3. The goals must be matched to the ability of the individual such that the person is likely to achieve the goal. Being able to achieve the goal is important for the individual's self-efficacy, for that is the individual will judge his or her ability to perform well on the tasks. This means that it is likely that the analyst will need to design intermediate goals to reflect progress in the learning process.
4. Feedback concerning the degree to which the goal is being achieved is necessary for goal setting to have an effect.
5. For goal setting to be effective, the individual has to accept the goal that is assigned or set. Often the acceptance of the goal is related to the degree of support or commitment of the organization to the goal-setting program.  
(Goldstein 1993)

Research shows that goal-setting theory can be applied to make training more effective. The Crucible has very well defined goals and is designed to motivate recruits to become Marines. The Crucible was constructed to be extremely difficult; thus one would expect that new Marines would have a higher level of performance than those who did not receive this training. There is a direct relationship between the goals and the events in the Crucible. The obstacles during the Crucible are designed so that the recruits can complete them; they were not designed to make

it impossible for the recruits to successfully complete them.

Based upon direct observation of the Crucible by the researcher, the recruits were extremely motivated to participate and complete the Crucible. During the discussions in the debriefs, it was evident that the recruits knew the intent of the Crucible. Through their understanding of the intent and motivation, the recruits maximized their experience and learning during the Crucible.

During the Crucible, the DIs are the recruit's mentors, they provide immediate feedback and critique their efforts. The DIs are there so that the recruits can achieve the highest level of effectiveness of the event. The recruits accept the Crucible as a goal they must achieve to earn the title of "Marine." Without completing the Crucible, the recruits cannot complete recruit training. It is a goal they must complete, otherwise they leave recruit training as a failure.

## **2. Expectancy Theory**

This theory is based on cognitive expectancies concerning outcomes that are likely to occur as a result of the participant's behavior and individual preferences among those outcomes. The theory states that outcomes have a

meaning if they are a means to achieving another outcome.

In regards to training programs, the theory states, "...they have a valance value for individuals if they believe the programs will permit them to achieve other outcomes."

(Vroom 1964) The theory also states an individual will not be motivated to complete an event that he or she believes has no value or is unrelated to future outcomes.

The Crucible uses the expectancy theory as another method to motivate recruits to complete all of the events. The completion of the eight major events leads to the completion of the Crucible, which leads to the completion of recruit training. If recruits were able to graduate recruit training without the completion of the Crucible, then it would be a useless event in the training curriculum. The Crucible is the final hurdle to becoming a Marine; the outcome of this event leads to the greater outcome of graduating recruit training. Thus, the new Marine is able to move to the next stage of his or her career.

### **3. Reinforcement Theory**

The relevant aspects of this theory to the Crucible are positive reinforcement and the timing of reinforcement.

In positive reinforcement, an individual is somehow rewarded if his behavior produces the correct answer or

response. In this theory, the subject reacts to a stimulus to receive a reward. For example, a worker might receive a day off from work if he or she is not absent from work or is late to work for a month (Pedalino and Gamboa 1974).

In the timing of reinforcement, the reward should be given immediately following the correct response. The immediate feedback helps the individual to reinforce correct responses and eliminate incorrect responses. A delay of the reinforcement might cause the subject to continue to exhibit inappropriate behavior after the correct behavior has been made (Pedalino and Gamboa 1974).

The Crucible uses the reinforcement theory very well. If a squad completes an event or obstacle they can move to the next event, which ultimately leads to completion of the Crucible. During the Crucible, the DIs provide positive verbal reinforcement to the recruits. The DIs also provide immediate feedback to the recruits at the completion of each event. If an obstacle is not completed properly, the DIs tell the recruits immediately, so the recruits know that they need to make changes in their actions to successfully complete the obstacle. Thus, a DI does not punish recruits after the completion of the Crucible for a mistake they made during the Crucible.

Finally, the recruits receive a symbolic reward or stimuli at the completion of the Crucible: the small eagle, globe, and anchor device and the title of "Marine." This reward reinforces all the values taught during the Crucible.

### **C. TEAMWORK IN TRAINING**

Teamwork is an essential element for mission accomplishment in both the military and civilian workplace. Recently, a greater emphasis has been put on team training in the civilian sector, while the military has always recognized its importance. Just as the military uses teams to train for combat, many corporations are using some kind of team training for their business environments.

Corporations frequently use simulations for team training. One such example is Southwest Airlines' "Crocodile River" simulation training (Solomon 1993). The simulation has four platforms, each representing an island. A river separates two of the islands and on each island are about fifteen people. The other two islands are known as Fire Island and Paradise Island. Each team on the first two islands has two wooden boards, a long one and a short one. Using only the boards, the teams must move through the obstacle course of "crocodile" infested waters to Fire Island and then reunite the entire team at Paradise Island

(Solomon 1993). If any team member falls into the river, the entire team must start over. The entire exercise takes from thirty minutes to three hours for the teams to complete it.

According to the facilitators of this particular simulation training, it has a number of advantages. A simulation offers a chance for individuals to increase their self-awareness and monitor their own behavior, specifically how they interact with the other team members. The simulations encourage decision making and the discussion of complicated topics while promoting teamwork (Solomon 1993).

The training designers of such simulations have identified some of the individual behaviors and transferred them into team roles. A few of the roles are:

- The shaper--the person who leads the groups
- The innovator--the individual who has the creative ideas
- The monitor/evaluator--the person who stands back, and observes and analyzes the process. (Solomon 1993)

During the exercises, the team members discover their own strength and weaknesses and how other team members perceive them. The facilitators ask each team member to discuss the role he or she plays as an individual and what

roles the other team members are playing during the exercise. Then, they discuss how the training and their roles relate to their actual jobs in the workplace (Solomon 1993).

In any team, there are both leaders and followers. Leadership can be described as a position, a set of traits, a process, or a number of other variables. In the simplest description, leadership is an activity. It is activity between one person and others. Leadership can be judged on whether the leader is followed by others (Roberts 1997). Leaders are expected to exercise influence and achieve the desired results of what they are trying to accomplish.

In a simulation, naturally developed roles of leaders, helpers, and followers are identified. Somebody must be a leader and the rest of the team will follow that leader. In a team, the roles that evolve make it seem evident who the leaders are and who the followers are in the team structure. In describing teamwork during simulations, some of the behaviors that are exhibited by team members are effective communication, coordination, team spirit and morale, cooperation, adaptability, acceptance of suggestions or criticism, and giving suggestions (Goldstein 1993).

The Crucible uses teams as its basic instrument to convey the lessons that are taught. The reaction course problems are very similar to the "Crocodile River" exercise conducted by Southwest Airlines. During the reaction course, the recruits do take the team roles that are identified by Solomon. One recruit is the leader (shaper), another recruit or recruits becomes the innovator, and the DI takes the role as the monitor/evaluator. This researcher observed that the recruits who were the leaders displayed leadership skills that would not be expected from individuals at that level of experience. The leadership traits of the recruits during the reaction course were those that would be expected of a Marine with greater leadership experience or leadership training. The leaders used their initiative and took charge of their teams to complete their assigned missions and tasks. All the team members obeyed their leaders, offered suggestions, and did their best to help the team in the mission. These same roles and traits were also displayed in many of the warrior stations.

Another element of the "Crocodile River" exercise that is shared by the Crucible is the debriefs after the warrior stations and reaction course problems. The recruits discuss their roles in the exercise and how the exercise

relates to their future position as Marines. The discussions during the debriefs is one of the methods that the Crucible uses to convey the message that to complete a mission, the recruits must be a team.

During research of team training by Oser, McCallum, Salas and Morgan (1989), the researchers found sets of behaviors that are observed to be associated with effective teams. Using these behaviors the researchers could discriminate between more effective teams and less effective teams (Goldstein 1993). Some of the specific behaviors that differentiate effective and ineffective teams are presented in Table 1.

Many of the behaviors that Goldstein and Oser, et al., found to be present during team training are also present in the squads of recruits during the Crucible. Due to the nature of the Crucible, the traits of effective communication, coordination, cooperation, adaptability, team spirit, and giving suggestions always emerge during the events. The recruits cannot overcome the obstacles presented to them without displaying of these traits. During the Crucible, the recruits exhibit many of the behaviors that are common for effective teams as presented in Table 1. It is also not uncommon for the recruits to

exhibit the ineffective behaviors, but the DIs quickly correct the recruits.

**Table 1. Behaviors that differentiate effective and ineffective teams**

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**Behaviors (effective and ineffective)**

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Helped another member who was having difficulty with a task.

Made positive statements to motivate the team.

Assisted another member when the latter had a difficult task to perform.

Praised another member for doing well on a task.

Made negative comments about the team or training. (I)

Suggested to another that he recheck his work so that he could his own mistake.

Raised his voice when correcting another member. (I)

Thanked another member for catching his mistake.

Coordinated gathering of information in an effective manner.

Provided suggestions on the best way to locate an error.

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I = Ineffective behaviors, the remainder were effective behaviors.

Source: Goldstein, I.L., Training In Organizations, (Brooks/Cole Publishing, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 1993), p 266.

As research continues to identify the traits between effective and ineffective teams, recommendations are being developed for team training. For example, Swezey and Salas (1991) identified a number of guidelines for team training. The following four guidelines seem to be particularly important:

1. Team training should encourage communication that supports the desire to work for the team and provides encouragement and respect for the team members and their input.
2. Team training must emphasize interaction and the need for team members to depend on one another.
3. Team training must emphasize the team and member goals and responsibilities. It must also provide for the opportunity to learn the responsibilities of team members and challenge the team to react to changes and unexpected events.
4. Training must emphasize teamwork skills. It must be organized to address the amount of teamwork needed and provide examples of both acceptable and unacceptable teamwork. In addition, it must stress interdependence and flexibility. (Goldstein 1993)

The guidelines that Swezey and Salas present for effective team training are also present in the Crucible. All four guidelines are inherent to the Crucible. The focus of the Crucible is teamwork and team training. All members of the team become an integral part if they are to complete the Crucible. The team members become dependent on each other to complete the obstacles and they learn from their experiences during the training. The recruits become effective and responsible team members. The recruits begin the Crucible as a team and they finish the Crucible as a team, teamwork is inherent throughout the whole two and one-half days.

#### **D. RITES AND CEREMONIALS IN ORGANIZATIONS**

Organizational culture consists of the language, values, attitudes, beliefs, and customs of an organization. When added together these variables give an organization its unique culture. The culture is usually traced to its founders. The founders usually possessed dynamic personalities, strong values, and a clear vision of what the organization should look like. The culture also develops from the organization's experience with the external environment. Lastly, the culture is developed from the need to maintain effective working relationships with its members. It is through communication that the culture is transmitted to its new members (Muchinsky 1997).

In an article by Beyer and Trice, they describe organizational culture as a network of shared understandings, norms, and values that are taken for granted and that lie beneath the surface of organizational life (Beyer and Trice 1987). They go on to explain that for an organization's culture to be created and maintained it must be communicated to its members in a tangible method. They call this tangible part of culture "cultural forms;" such forms are occasions in which underlying, unstated understandings are brought to the surface (Beyer and Trice 1987). A similar definition of culture is

provided by Trice, et al., "culture is the system of such publicly and collectively accepted meanings operating for a given group at a given time...the culture of any social system arises from a network of shared ideologies." (Trice and Beyer 1984)

One method through which an organization communicates its culture is rites and ceremonies. In performing these activities, members of the organization use other cultural forms such as customary language, gestures, ritualized behaviors, artifacts, other symbols, and settings (Trice and Beyer 1984). The reason these other forms are used is to heighten the expression of shared meanings appropriate to the occasion. These shared meanings are usually told through myths, sags, legends, or other stories associated with the occasion.

In the book, Rites of Passage (1909), the Dutch scholar Arnold Van Gennep, noticed similarities in many different tribal societies in customary behaviors that accompany universal and unavoidable events such as pregnancy and childbirth, the onset of sexual maturity, marriage, and death (Beyer and Trice 1987). Van Gennep stated since such events create marked changes in status for the individuals involved, that the customary behaviors be called "rites of passage." (Beyer and Trice 1987)

In rites of passage, Van Gennep observed three distinctive subsets of behaviors, which he called rites of separation, rites of transition, and rites of incorporation (Trice and Beyer 1984). An example in modern organizational life of all three subsets of behavior is the induction of recruits to a military service. The rite of separation begins when the recruit leaves home, arrives at the training base, receives a distinguishing haircut, and is made to wear a uniform. In this phase, the recruit is generally stripped of his/her past identity and status. In the rite of transition phase, the recruit learns the skills associated with his/her new identity. The recruit learns the skills needed to join the organization; such as marching, shooting on the rifle range, hiking, etc. During the final stages of this phase, recruits are given tests to determine what new permanent roles they are capable of assuming in the organization. In the last phase, the rite of incorporation, recruits are given assignments to permanent units; then the recruits participate in some form of graduation ceremony with issuing of awards and insignia designating each recruit's newly assigned permanent status (Trice and Beyer 1984).

Another example of a rite of passage is seen in training new employees of a Japanese bank described by

Beyer, et al. In the rite of separation phase, the new employees attended an entrance ceremony with their families and the bank president welcomed the new employees. The new employees dressed in uniforms and song the company song.

In the rite of transition phase, the new employees were submitted to several training ordeals. The new employees spent time at a military base undergoing some martial training; and spent time at a Zen temple to meditate, which included eating tasteless gruel and observing a whole series of Zen rituals. The last ordeal was a twenty five-mile walk held at the end of training. The new employees walked the first nine miles as a single group, the next seven miles in designated groups (which led to inter-group competitions), and the last seven were walked alone and in silence. The reason for this method of walking was to teach the value of perseverance, self-denial, and rejection of competition as the route to collective accomplishment.

The last phase, the rite of incorporation, had the new employees taking their permanent jobs at the bank. (Beyer and Trice 1987)

With both examples, many forms of the organization's culture are incorporated into the rites of passage and can be easily detected. Some of the rituals in the military are the uniforms, strict haircuts, the polished boots, and

the meticulous method in the making of a bed. Recruits exchange myths and folktales about recruit training. Symbolic gestures include saluting, standing at attention, and the step forward at the swearing-in ceremony. Some of the ceremonial activities during recruit training are marching, firing on the rifle range, and the graduation ceremony. Lastly, even the construction of the military base, with its artifacts and physical settings, lends itself to the activities that are incorporated in the recruit training rites and ceremonials. (Trice and Beyer 1984)

During the emblem ceremony at the conclusion of the Crucible, the recruits finish their rite of transition phase. One example of the rite of transition is that there is an audience of Marines to witness their symbolic rite of becoming a Marine. This gathering and audience of Marines shows to the recruits the importance of the title of Marine and the awarding of the Marine emblem is a solemn and very important event. To reinforce the importance of this event, the Commanding General of MCRD, who is ultimately responsible of their training, is present to witness the event. To further reinforce the bonds of "brotherhood" in becoming a Marine, if a recruit happens to be a son or daughter of a Marine or former Marine, then that parent is

invited to witness the emblem ceremony. Through these simple but important gestures, the Marine Corps reinforces to the recruits the lessons that they have learned in the past eleven weeks and the motto, "band of brothers."

Both the rites of passage and the symbols of an organization are important elements that must be understood and realized when bringing new members into an organization. Proper methods to communicate the culture must be developed so that the correct message is transmitted during training.

This chapter included a section of current training theories dealing with goal setting and motivation, team-building, and organizational rites and ceremonies. The next chapter presents the perceptions of the training effectiveness of the Crucible from the perspective of the Drill Instructors and staff from the Recruit Training Regiment. Many of the theories presented in this chapter are reflected in the observations and perceptions that are presented in the next chapter.

## **V. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS**

### **A. DATA COLLECTION**

The data collection for this thesis began when the researcher observed one entire evolution of the Crucible at Camp Pendleton in December 1998. All events during the 54-hour event were observed and recorded in an attempt to formulate non-biased opinions about the training.

Subsequently, this thesis used information obtained through personal interviews to gather qualitative data regarding perceptions of Marine Corps Recruit Depot officers and drill instructors concerning the training effectiveness of the Crucible. The sample consisted of seven Recruit Training Regiment personnel of the ranks of Sergeant, Staff Sergeant and Captain. Four of the Drill Instructors were from Weapons and Field Training Battalion and are training facilitators for the Crucible. Two Drill Instructors and the Company Commander were from the Recruit Training Regiment, which is responsible for training recruits. Two non-structured discussions were conducted with the Commanding Officers of the Recruit Training Regiment and Weapons and Field Training Battalion, respectively, at MCRD San Diego. Both of the Commanding Officers hold the rank of Colonel.

The interviews were recorded on audiocassette, and all of the interviews on the tapes were transcribed. The interviews were conducted at Camp Pendleton and MCRD San Diego over the period of 02 December 1998 and 15-16 December 1998.

Before each interview, the interviewer made a brief introduction and explained the purpose of the interview and the scope of the research. The interviewees were asked for name, rank, billet, and unit. The interviewer also asked permission to tape the interviews. The interviewer explained that their answers would not be released with any reference to their names and they should answer all questions honestly.

All of the drill instructors who were interviewed were Sergeants and Staff Sergeants; thus, they were junior in rank to the interviewer. The drill instructors seemed open and honest and expressed their personal opinions of the questions asked of them. Due to the nature of the drill instructors' position, it is likely that their answers would be biased towards a positive perception of the Crucible. The recruit Company Commander was of the same rank as the interviewer, and was comfortable expressing his answers and opinions. It is also likely that he would have a bias

towards a positive perception of the Crucible due to his position as a recruit Company Commander.

The drill instructors from Weapons and Field Training Battalion were selected randomly from the staff. The recruit company staff members who were interviewed were selected from the recruit company that the interviewer had accompanied during the research and observation of the Crucible.

#### **B. SURVEY QUESTIONS**

The interview questions were open-ended and allowed the respondents to discuss any matter that they felt were related to the issue addressed. A list of the basic questions can be found in Table 2.

**Table 2. Interview Questions**

1. Do you think the Crucible is successful in its intended mission to build teamwork? How do you know this/what criteria do you use? How do the staff/DIs measure team growth and cohesion? What are the more powerful events of the Crucible that build teamwork? How else is teamwork taught during boot camp? Is that a building block for teamwork that is learned during Crucible?
2. Do you think the Crucible is successful in its intended mission to build core values? How do you know this/what criteria do you use? What are the more powerful events of the Crucible that build core values? How else are core values taught during boot camp? Is that a building block for the core values that is learned during Crucible? Does the Crucible bring recruits to a standard level of values? How does the Crucible use teams to teach core values?
3. Is the Crucible a successful organizational rite of passage for the recruits; i.e., does it create an identity

with being a Marine and a commitment to the organization that otherwise wouldn't be there? How do the recruits start to identify themselves with the Marine Corps by completing the Crucible? Does the Crucible help the recruits fill their role as a Marine so that they can identify themselves with former and present Marines?

4. How does the Crucible reflect the organizational culture of the USMC? What USMC norms/cultural values are reflected in the Crucible? What symbols that are important to the Corps are used in Crucible? How are they used? What shared values, beliefs, attitudes are used in the Crucible? How?

5. What training is provided by Crucible? Will some of the training transfer to combat skills or decision-making?

6. Will the Crucible be adaptable to subsequent changes in societal values and morals, i.e., can the events be changed to provide a challenge and stimulate young men and women as time progresses? Can it be changed? Do you want it to change? How does the staff/DIs make input to change or improve things? Should it ever be changed? Do you collect any feedback from the recruits about the Crucible? Is there any other feedback collected?

7. What does the Crucible add to training that wasn't possible before? Other Comments?

Source: Author

### **C. DATA ANALYSIS AND THEME DEVELOPMENT**

The data were compiled and then content analyzed to identify the perceptions of the interviewees regarding the Crucible. Themes are presented in this chapter along with supporting justification. Each justification is reinforced with quotations that exemplify the opinions of the Marines interviewed.

#### **D. ANALYSIS**

The data analysis yielded five prominent themes. These themes are presented and discussed below. Each theme is supported with quotations that exemplify the opinions of the Marines interviewed.

**THEME I: TEAMWORK AND CORE VALUES TRAINING IS PREVALENT DURING THE CRUCIBLE AND REINFORCES THE TEAMWORK AND CORE VALUE TRAINING TAUGHT DURING RECRUIT TRAINING PRIOR TO THE CRUCIBLE.**

One of the most consistent themes during all the interviews was that teamwork and core values are the two major concepts that are the underlying themes in the Crucible. All of the teamwork and core values training that was conducted before the Crucible during recruit training came together during the Crucible as a practical application of the concepts taught in classes. All of the interviewees expressed this perception of the Crucible.

One respondent stated:

The Crucible forms them [recruits] better as a team, they've already done things to work as a team as far as the initial drill and preparing uniforms...They know a little bit about teamwork, and how to work as a team, but the Crucible is broken down on a squad level versus everything at MCRD at a platoon level...The ideas about teamwork come out when they want to talk about what happened after they've completed the mission during the debrief. The drill instructor will ask, what have we learned by this? Teamwork. That's the first thing that the recruits always say. So the drill instructor always has to pry and take the questions a step further. There are different stations that are specifically set up for core values where the recruits

talk about that [core values]...but also in some of the debriefs and when the drill instructor gets a chance to talk to the recruits, they are always using core values...when they talk to them about any type of thing...All the groundwork has been pretty much laid out before the Crucible and the recruits all understand the core values and all the definitions of what honor means and what courage means and what commitment means, and how they apply that to and identify with the obstacles and each other in the things that they go through. So they understand the core values and how it applies to what they're doing.

Another respondent explained:

...the Commandant gave the depot (MCRD) one more week to put the defining moment in the Crucible and gave a lot more time to the drill instructor, and the senior drill instructor time to do what he needed to do with the recruits to get them up to this point so they could run through the Crucible. The Commandant's intent was to enforce those values, our shared values, i.e., the core values, honor, courage and commitment, and not only get the recruits at the end of 12 weeks mentally and physically ready for the Fleet Marine Force, probably definitely more importantly, morally ready. To do this, the Commandant put in the defining Moment, which turned into the Crucible...the analogy of the reference to the Crucible as in metalwork after heating, shaping, hammering, hardening the final product before it's done, is dipped in metalwork, a cold liquid that provides a hard but not brittle outer strength to the weapons. So in and of itself, the Crucible has no value, it is only the finishing process to what has gone on. So the final process is only as good as what's happened before, and the analogy really works here and in and of itself, going out and running the Crucible is not going to do anything for you except maybe get you tired and hungry. If everything else has been done right up to that point, the drill instructor has demonstrated and lived core values, good physical fitness has developed their knowledge and skills, and the recruits understand what it is to be a Marine. This final event solidifies that to them through practical experience, and it's fused into the recruits by a process by which they have to demonstrate core values, commitment, physical endurance, and mental

endurance in order to succeed. And it is that process that bonds them to each other and to the Corps.

An interviewee also added these thoughts:

...it [Crucible] builds teamwork because since day one, we start out teaching about core values, teaching about what teamwork is, about how if one person slacks, the whole team is going to suffer from it. The Crucible kind of reinforces that with the recruits because they see that if one guy doesn't pull his weight, then the whole team is not going to be successful in getting through that particular obstacle...I think the Crucible is successful and I think it does build teamwork.

Another respondent explained his perceptions:

Once you take a couple of squads through the Crucible out, even after a few obstacles, you start to see the recruits start realizing what each one is good at, what other recruits are good at, and they start building a team and start relying on each other's strengths more, especially on the second day when they're tired, and they're a little hungry and a little bit edgy. They seem to, even with all that, they come together better as a team...they should already know how to work as a team depending on who the drill instructors are and the things that they enforce. Each drill instructor is different, some enforce teamwork more, some put more responsibility on the recruit squad leaders and team leaders, and inadvertently, that will work teamwork eventually.

**THEME II: THE CRUCIBLE IS A RITE OF TRANSITION, FROM A RECRUIT TO A MARINE, IT IS THE LAST OBSTACLE FOR A RECRUIT TO GRADUATE FROM RECRUIT TRAINING.**

In the interviews conducted, the majority of the respondents identified the Crucible as the process that finally transforms a recruit to a Marine. Every drill instructor was in favor of the personalized approach of making Marines during the Marine Corps emblem ceremony.

One respondent explained how recruits will identify themselves with Marine Corps by completing the Crucible:

Well, first of all, they become a Marine, they literally are identified with the Marine Corps that moment the drill instructor calls them Marine and gives them the emblem. Now, the Marines are the only service that does that...we make a stark division and say, you're not going to be a Marine until we say you're a Marine. You've got to finish the process and then you'll be a Marine. And so we keep that image and that goal out of reach until the recruits accomplished everything and we continue to focus on becoming a Marine. View it, show it from all its dimensions, from our battlefield history to our customs and courtesies, to everyday Marines forward deployed, they hear that theme of becoming a Marine. They see it, their drill instructor exemplifies it by his own career to that point, so this picture has been painted one stroke at a time for them over 11 weeks, and they get to the end, earn the title of Marine, and they step back. Once having become a Marine, the new Marines understand, they understand the ethos of the Corps, they understand those things that we hold to be especially defining about the Marine Corps; that we would never leave our Marines on the battlefield, we never quit until the job is done, we work as a member of a team, so the recruits don't have any problem. I think, identifying themselves with the Marine Corps, and the fact that their drill instructor calls them Marines, instead of, as we used to have in the former training schedule, have some Lieutenant Colonel during the graduation ceremony standing on a parade deck a hundred yards away, saying, "Good morning, Marines," for the first time, impersonal, but still a proud moment. The recruits are still glad they finished, but the Crucible makes it so personalized and so effective in that their drill instructor who has been training them makes that recognition that they'll never forget it, I guarantee you.

Another respondent explained his perception of the Crucible as a rite of passage:

...the Crucible is there and it's real, it's very much talked about, so the recruits know that's their thing, that's the last thing they need to do, and know that's their major event, that's the event where they are going to become Marines...I think that the recruits understand recruit training, but then they tend to separate the Crucible from their recruit training because then they're like, oh, the Crucible, this is the point where we become Marines.

Another respondent also explained:

...the four recruit platoons that I've taken through the Crucible, when I give them the eagle, globe and anchor, and I've had a recruit say, so this is what it's all about. That's what sticks in my mind...and the recruits think that they just went through hell and then when they are done and then they get their eagle, globe, and anchor and a lot of the Marines, it's what they pictured, and that's what they would consider their right of passage.

A respondent explained how recruits should complete the Crucible if it is to be an effective defining moment:

I think they [MCRD] should make it mandatory that the recruits do all the obstacles, or if they get hurt during the Crucible, and they can shake it off, and do the next obstacle, then that's fine. But as far as the first day comes along and something happens to them, they twist an ankle or cut something and gets a couple of stitches on a finger, then I think that they should drop back to the next week of training and do the Crucible again. If they're going to talk about the Crucible being what it is, a defining moment...if a recruit doesn't do the Crucible, it obviously hasn't been a defining moment and it hasn't obviously defined anything to that individual.

Another respondent described his perceptions of the Crucible as a rite of passage:

I think it is definitely an effective right of passage, because in the old schedule, and the way boot camp has

been for years, the recruits go up there (Camp Pendleton) to do the field training and do the weapons training and they come back down here (MCRD) for another phase, the drill instructor is still stressing the recruits out up until the day of graduation on the old schedule. He's still being a drill instructor and then the recruits graduate and they're gone, so the recruits really don't get a chance to see what it's like to work as a squad in a real and tough environment until they get out to School of Infantry or to the fleet. The way we do it now is they get to see that drill instructor as a Marine, as a sergeant or a staff sergeant, sitting down with him one on one, debriefs on what they just did, and that's more realistic the way it's going to be out in the fleet, and now the recruits get prepared for that before they leave boot camp. I mean I don't think a lot of people thought when the Crucible came about that when that drill instructor took off his campaign cover and sat down and talked core values or taught the Crucible or did the Crucible with them, and debriefed them and talked to them like a person, the drill instructors thought they were going to lose credibility, and they wanted to be respected. I think they're more respected now because that recruit gets to see, wow, this guy was a ball of fire, he's always constantly in my face for eight weeks, or for nine weeks, ten weeks, and then now he's sitting down with me one on one telling me, hey, do you remember what I taught you three weeks ago, well, this is how you need to apply it on the Crucible and I think that the recruit gains more respect for the drill instructor now the way they do it. I think the recruits really identify themselves as a Marine by completing the Crucible and if you just look at their faces up there when they get presented the eagle, globe and anchor, they're dirty, they're tired, and that's the way a Marine should become a Marine, is out in the field. And then they go down and have a warrior breakfast. So I think it is very effective on the last thing they do before they graduate.

**THEME III: THE MEDAL OF HONOR CITATIONS ARE IMPORTANT SYMBOLS THAT ARE UTILIZED DURING THE CRUCIBLE AND REFLECT THE CULTURE OF THE MARINE CORPS.**

Every respondent expressed that the Medal of Honor citations were important elements of the Crucible and helped to reinforce the lessons of teamwork and core values. Many respondents felt it was important for Marine Corps history to be included in the Crucible.

A respondent explained how the Medal of Honor citations are used during the Crucible:

...the warrior stations that have Medal of Honor citations, shows the recruits that some Marines give their lives to maybe to take a hill or to knock a tank out to achieve the mission and they pay the ultimate price by giving their life, so it's something the recruits have to think about, there's not too many organizations that are going to ask you to lay it all on the line.

Another respondent answered:

When they [recruits] read that citation, usually all the ones I've had experience with, they're like in awe, and then as they do the obstacle, they think about what that Medal of Honor winner did and they think, wow, I can understand how he did that and why he did that, and some of them are like, hey, those guys were crazy back then, but I think it helps them identify as a Marine by reading the citation and talking about it, that helps them identify more...the Medal of Honor is the background so the recruits know what this person did and why they did it, and what he accomplished by doing that, and it gives them a sense of well, if he can do it, I can do it.

Another respondent explained further:

...when the drill instructor reads a Medal of Honor citation, and then the recruits do their event, and

then the DIs do their critique, and I can't speak for all drill instructors, but I usually always use that scenario during the debrief and compare it, as in comparison, what do you [recruits] think if it was a burning building and you were trying to get through a certain obstacle, so they can identify with the situation. And then you have to remind them, too, to put them in that situation, because sometimes recruits tend to not think of it as a big deal. Some stations are not that physically difficult, but if you put them in that situation where you tell them, if it were an actual burning building, I know you wouldn't have been moving that slowly. Then they start to think about what could happen in real life. So they identify with the citation and the obstacle.

Another respondent explained his thoughts concerning the Medal of Honor citations:

...all the Medal of Honor citations are evolved from esprit de corps and the recruits are going to learn about different people in the Marine Corps and that it doesn't take the Captain or the Gunnery Sergeant to win the Medal of Honor. It's the low guy on the totem pole, like a PFC, or a Lance Corporal that wins the Medal of Honor...Marines don't have to get all the way through the Marine Corps rank structure to start winning the big honors...when you have a lot of drill instructors saying how we don't want to lose to an enemy or the Marines are never just going to accept defeat and that is especially shown in the Medal of Honor citations. You've got that Marine who was wounded on two or three different days throughout a long fight and he kept going, he ended up getting killed at the end of the battle, but throughout that time, he could have very well got on a truck and got hauled out to the hospital, but he stayed there and led his platoon. It's important for recruits to hear that kind of history.

One of the respondents expressed his thoughts of the importance of using Marine Corps history during the Crucible:

...the Crucible teaches them [recruits] history, it's teaching them a little bit about where we come from. All Marines should know the history of where they come from, and our way of life here as a Marine. It helps to build the role as a Marine...but we're teaching a real basic Private here, so we're producing a basic Marine, but he understands just the basics and once we get that, we've accomplished our mission.

**THEME IV: THE CRUCIBLE PROVIDES NON-TACTICAL COMBAT-RELATED TRAINING TO THE RECRUITS.**

The combat-related training conducted during recruit training and the Crucible is of a non-technical nature. Marines learn technical and tactical infantry skills at the School of Infantry (SOI). All Marines, regardless of their future jobs in the Marine Corps, undergo infantry skills training immediately after their leave period from recruit training. During the Crucible, combat-related training is focused on the intangible skills that are needed in a high-stress combat situation.

One interviewee described how combat-related training is conducted during the Crucible:

I think a lot of the training is intangible and you're not going to know how well you're doing until these guys actually go into combat at some point in time...but there are a lot of intangibles that you get from doing the Crucible...They're not really learning any kind of

combat skills other than teamwork and to depend on your buddy. They [drill instructors] don't teach them tactical formations or anything like that...they do learn decision-making though, you've got to be able to think quickly, I think the Crucible does emphasize that, and a lot of these guys [recruits] can make a decision. Somebody that is 18 years old has never been a guy in charge. The decision to throw ammo across a wall instead of a rifle first, that's a big decision for him, so I think that kind of training is important, you've got it all the way through the Crucible. And even if you're not the guy on the scene, they're [recruits] always thinking ahead, well, I would do it this way if I was in charge, and so at least they're thinking about it. So when they do get to be in charge, they've got kind of a plan and they can think back, well, what would this guy do...and I do see that they're tired and hungry and we're trying to get them to think when they are tired and hungry.

Another interviewee discussed the skills that are taught during the Crucible:

...they [recruits] learn things that we've been teaching them about, hydration, about you're going to deal with sleep deprivation, you're going to deal with food deprivation, you're going to have to get up in the middle of the night and it's going to be cold and you're going to have to deal with these things...And then there are the decision-making skills and I always taught them you need to think fast, you need to think smart, what needs to be done first, and then you've got to decide, well, this is how I want to do it. And they've got to start thinking faster and it's hard for them because they haven't really had to make real hard decisions...it gets hard for them to think faster, but they start realizing that we've got to move, we've got to think fast, and we've got this much time. I would give them situations like you've got the enemy coming up behind you, you need to go, and instead of saying, you've got 25 minutes, I just tell them, this is your situation, you've got some Marines, you need to get them out of there as soon as possible. And that enforces and kind of pushes them to think faster and make better decisions. I think it helps a lot along the decision-making skills and combat awareness.

Another interviewee discussed how the Crucible teaches decision-making skills in a combat situation:

The Crucible is teaching them [recruits] and giving them an opportunity to do something on their own. And in all the recruit training, they're not provided the chance to make any real decisions or to do anything, they just kind of do as they're told. Marine Corps Boot Camp tries to get the recruits to have an instant willing obedience to orders which is, in my opinion, absolutely necessary, but the Crucible puts it on the recruits to decide within themselves what they're going to do and how they're going to do it, and they really can't ask the drill instructor for guidance or the field instructor for guidance. They can ask questions, but it's better if the drill instructor stays out of it and lets them figure it out, and of course...they have to come up with a plan during the Crucible. They read the situation and they have to come up with a plan and how they're going to execute the plan to achieve whatever it is they have to complete. Say, for instance, if they're in combat town or, a little skirmish type situation, before they go on a patrol, they're going to talk about it first, what they're going to do. And then they're going to break it down from there, what we're going to need as far as equipment and who's going to carry what and what plan of attack that they're going to take to accomplish the mission...it's geared towards getting them thinking and moving and interacting, but it's basically, it's somewhat physical...but it is designed to get them to think and ultimately they're going to get combat skills...The Crucible is designed to get them to think and when they're in combat, of course, they're going to have to think, how are we going to do this. It's going to be more involved than just shooting their machine gun, they're going to have to think of how they're going to take the building or who's the strongest person, who's the weakest person, they're going to have to know their team and how to employ them and the Crucible is kind of good for that because it teaches them they have to use strong recruits for certain things and quick agile ones for other things, and smart ones to help figure out something that might be kind of difficult. The teamwork thing is a plus, it

helps them figure it out, it enhances them.

Another interviewee added his input on decision-making training during the Crucible:

Decision making, as far as a team effort, that's very important because there's always a leader, and you just never know what can happen in a combat situation. Something is going to happen or you're going to find yourself having to make a decision. And you have to come up with quick decisions, and that's what we [drill instructors] stress, you can't sit there for 30 minutes trying to figure out what you're going to do. The Crucible stations, some of them only allow 25 minutes...it's important and it teaches them to make quick timely decisions, correct decisions, and it does help them to make the proper decision very quickly, without having a whole lot of conversing amongst each other.

An interviewee told how the Crucible relates to a combat situation:

...I think that primarily the whole Crucible is set up somewhat similar to a combat environment, going from obstacle to obstacle is like going from objective to objective, accomplishing mission after mission, so it's the same thing they have to do when they get into real combat...it is giving them a basic idea about or what it's going to be like in combat.

**THEME V: THE LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY OF THE CRUCIBLE SHOULD NOT BE CHANGED IN THE FUTURE TO MEET CHANGES IN CIVILIAN SOCIETY.**

In almost every case, the interviewees stated that they do not think the Crucible should change its scope or level of challenge in the future, even if the values of society were to continue decline. They felt that new recruits should meet the level of standards,

values, and morals that the Marine Corps sets; not make the Crucible or recruit training easier. In fact, many interviewees felt that the Crucible should be made harder to complete in the future.

An interviewee stated:

I think it [the Crucible] will stay the same, same as it is now because you take somebody from War I, War II, Vietnam, Desert Storm, each one of those guys that fought in that war, they probably had different values and different upbringing than the guys that fought before them, and I guarantee you that a Marine ten years ago says that he thought his generation was probably better. I think the Marine Corps is not going to, and I hope we don't change to reflect society. I think eventually society is going to turn around and come back to reflect more of what Marines believe in. And I don't think the Crucible is going to change ten years from now, I think it will be the same. If anything, it will be harder than it is now...but I don't think the basic foundation of it will change.

Another interviewee stated:

...it [the Crucible] can be changed, I don't think it should probably change too much. Most of the recruits probably don't want it to change either because they know that some other Marines ahead of them already did it, so they want to be just like them. Society is changing, we're getting a different breed of individuals in here, as a whole, but I think they ought to conform to the way that we train and we shouldn't change because our society is changing...it should change to make it maybe a little harder, but I think it should toughen to the sense that we have our own identity as Marines here.

This interviewee stated:

I don't think it should change. I think society needs to change because they're making the kids coming in, the ones that are coming in, they might be high school graduates, but the level of teaching

in high school has gone down and I think society is kind of on its own program right now, and it's kind of screwed up. In my opinion, it's really lost touch...the Crucible and boot camp in general should be hammering to them, hey, you're not in society, you're in the Marine Corps and we do things different here, we do things better, faster, and just overall better basically than society. At least they look up to us, we don't look up to them...it's [the Crucible] going to change with the times, but I think it should still keep the Marine Corps history, the Marine Corps background as a foundation, and then just kind spin off a little bit.

An interviewee presented his opinion on training if societal values change:

...I think on the kids we are getting from society now, how we're training them, I don't think that that should have a factor in recruit training because we train them, regardless. I don't see a difference in whether they [recruits] came in the '70s, the '60s, or now in the '90s, which is no matter, the Marine Corps is never going to change, and therefore, it shouldn't matter because once they [recruits] get here, they're going to change again. As far as the recruit is concerned, he's going to change because we're going to make him into a Marine, I mean that's the whole goal. I don't think that we have to be changing things for society. I don't think recruit training or the Crucible should change for society. If it's changed though, I don't think it should be lessened, if anything, it should be intensified.

#### **E. ADDITIONAL FINDINGS**

During the interviews, questions were asked to the interviewees regarding organizational culture. Many interviewees had some difficulty understanding the questions regarding this subject. Many gave their

thoughts on the relationship between the Marine Corps organizational culture and the Crucible. From the data regarding this area of research, no overall common theme could be developed. The only theme that reflected organizational culture was Theme III, which discussed the Medal of Honor citations used in the Crucible.

During the discussions, interviews, and the direct observations by the researcher, there were only a few areas that were recognized for potential change to improve the Crucible. The areas for potential change are in the use of Medal of Honor citations, the inclusion of a tactical scenario, the audience participation during the emblem ceremony, and the inclusion of a scoring system during the event.

#### **F. SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW DATA**

From the interview data five common themes were developed regarding the perceptions of training effectiveness of the Crucible. The first theme dealt with teamwork training and core values training during the Crucible. This theme was developed from the first and second set of interview questions. The second theme discussed the Crucible as a rite of passage during recruit training. This theme was developed from

the third set of interview questions. The third theme discussed the Medal of Honor citations and their utilization in the Crucible. Data for this theme came from portions of the fourth and seventh set of interview questions. The fourth theme dealt with the type of combat training that is taught during the Crucible. Data for this theme was developed from the fifth and seventh set of interview questions. The fifth theme discussed whether the Crucible should be changed in the future to reflect society. This theme was developed from the sixth set of interview questions.

The next chapter provides a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for the Crucible based on the research and data collected. The next chapter also discusses areas of future research regarding the Crucible.

## **VI. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. SUMMARY**

The Commandant of the Marine Corps directed that Marine recruit training would have a defining moment, this defining moment evolved into the Crucible. The Crucible has become an essential part of recruit training, which focuses on team building and core values. The Crucible is designed specifically to contribute to making a Marine capable of fighting 21<sup>st</sup> century battles (Krulak 1997).

This thesis concentrated on the perspectives of the Recruit Training Regiment's drill instructors and officers regarding the training effectiveness of the Crucible. It is acknowledged that interviewees may have responded to the interview questions with a positive bias towards Recruit training and the Crucible. However, all participants were asked for their honest perceptions, and all were given complete anonymity. It is with this understanding that the following themes emerged:

THEME I: TEAMWORK AND CORE VALUES TRAINING IS PREVALENT DURING THE CRUCIBLE AND REINFORCES THE TEAMWORK AND CORE VALUE TRAINING TAUGHT DURING RECRUIT TRAINING PRIOR TO THE CRUCIBLE.

THEME II: THE CRUCIBLE IS A RITE OF TRANSITION, FROM A RECRUIT TO A MARINE, IT IS THE LAST OBSTACLE FOR A RECRUIT TO GRADUATE FROM RECRUIT TRAINING.

THEME III: THE MEDAL OF HONOR CITATIONS ARE IMPORTANT SYMBOLS THAT ARE UTILIZED DURING THE CRUCIBLE AND REFLECT THE CULTURE OF THE MARINE CORPS.

THEME IV: THE CRUCIBLE PROVIDES NON-TACTICAL COMBAT-RELATED TRAINING TO THE RECRUITS.

THEME V: THE LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY OF THE CRUCIBLE SHOULD NOT BE CHANGED IN THE FUTURE TO MEET CHANGES IN CIVILIAN SOCIETY.

The Crucible is a powerful event for recruits during recruit training. The Crucible is successful in its mission as a defining moment for recruits. From the viewpoint of the Marines who were interviewed, it is an effective tool for reinforcing the lessons of teamwork and core values that were taught to the recruits during the previous ten weeks of recruit training.

The Crucible serves as a rite of transition for the recruits during recruit training. Overall, Marine Corps recruit training is a rite of passage for transforming civilians into Marines. The Crucible is an effective rite of transition; it is during this event that recruits finally become Marines. From the researcher's direct observation and the perceptions of the interviewees regarding the emblem ceremony, it is a very effective and emotional rite.

During the Crucible, the history of the Marine Corps is interwoven into the warrior stations through the Medal of

Honor citations. For the recruits, this is the first time that they learn of Marine Corps history in a non-classroom setting. Through the citations at the warrior stations, the recruits can feel and imagine what it takes to use core values in a practical situation. The citations are also used to motivate the recruits to keep a positive outlook and finish the Crucible. Basically, they are related to show the recruit that any pain he is feeling is not as severe as the pain, hardship, and sacrifice that it took for that Marine to earn the Medal of Honor.

The Crucible is an effective tool for teaching decision-making skills in a stressful combat environment. Even though the Crucible is not designed as a continuous tactical scenario, it is a powerful event for inducing stress through sleep and food deprivation, which Marines will likely encounter in combat. The Crucible is the first step to developing Marines who can think and fight in our nation's battles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The level of difficulty of the Crucible is designed at a level for the recruits to complete. The purpose of the Crucible is not attrition; it is not employed to drop recruits from their teams. It is designed to strengthen the team bonds and core values. The perceptions of the Marines are that Marine Corps standards are at a higher

level of the civilian population and that to lessen the difficulty of any portion of recruit training would weaken the Marine Corps in the future.

In a theoretical framework, the Crucible was designed in a manner that conforms to some of the modern accepted training methods and theories. In this framework, there are no apparent major weaknesses of the Crucible.

During the discussions, interviews, and the direct observations by the researcher, there were only a few areas that were recognized for potential change to improve the Crucible. The areas for potential change are in the use of Medal of Honor citations, the inclusion of a tactical scenario, the audience participation during the emblem ceremony, and the inclusion of a scoring system during the event. These areas are addressed in the recommendations.

#### **B. CONCLUSIONS**

The Crucible is a valid training event for the goals that the Commandant envisioned as a defining moment. The Crucible is an especially strong training event. The strength of the Crucible is demonstrated by meeting the expectations of the Marine Corps Recruit Depot staff, and in its favorable comparison to accepted theories of training and motivation.

The Crucible is an innovative idea that has added to the prestige of Marine Corps recruit training. The Crucible and recruit training are developing Marines with esprit de corps, self-confidence, and determination to complete any mission or task that is assigned. The Crucible has proven itself to be a beneficial element in the overall transformation of a civilian to a Marine.

#### **C. RECOMMENDATIONS**

A statistical analysis of the Crucible outcomes should be conducted. Specifically, it is recommended that research should track Marines who participated in the Crucible in an attempt to isolate the effects of the Crucible in the areas of attrition, retention, promotion, and performance.

Another analysis could be done that would include the Crucible event at Parris Island. This research only looked at the West Coast version of the Crucible, further research could examine the Crucible at Parris Island to insure that the training is equal at both training sites.

The researcher's direct observation of the Crucible, and discussions with MCRD drill instructors and officers, suggest the following recommendations:

1. The use of Medal of Honor citations should be revamped so that there is more of a diversity of actions in the citations and that the citations, if

possible, could more accurately match the training event.

2. The events of the Crucible should be more tightly linked together in a tactical scenario, to include a tactical bivouac. It is recognized that the recruits have few tactical skills, but the added stress of a tactical situation could enhance teamwork skills and combat decision-making skills.
3. To keep the sanctity of the emblem ceremony, it is recommended that spectators of the emblem ceremony, who are not directly connected to the recruits' training, be kept at a respectful distance while the drill instructors are awarding the Marine Corps emblems to the new Marines.
3. Some kind of scoring system between the squads should be developed to create a competition during the Crucible. The winning squad could be recognized at the MCRD graduation ceremony. The competition would enhance the teamwork and squad cohesion aspect of the Crucible.

As the Crucible continues to become an icon of a Marine's recruit training experience, it will continue to improve and enhance training. One of the best measures of success is imitation, and the Crucible meets this challenge. Soon after the implementation of the Crucible, the Navy added Battle Stations to their recruit training (Zayatz 1998). The Crucible has set the example for the correct method to train the future recruits for our nation's armed forces.

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